

PINE VALLEY



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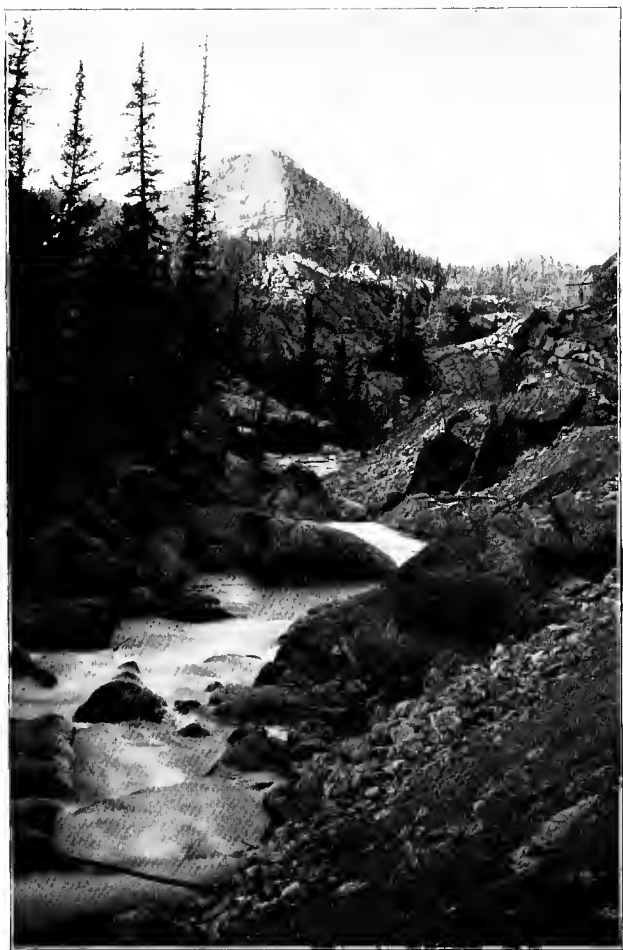
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QUARTZ MOUNTAIN.

PINE VALLEY

BY

LEWIS B. FRANCE



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ONE WINTER
AT
THE GRAY EAGLE MINE.

ONE WINTER

AT

THE GRAY EAGLE MINE.

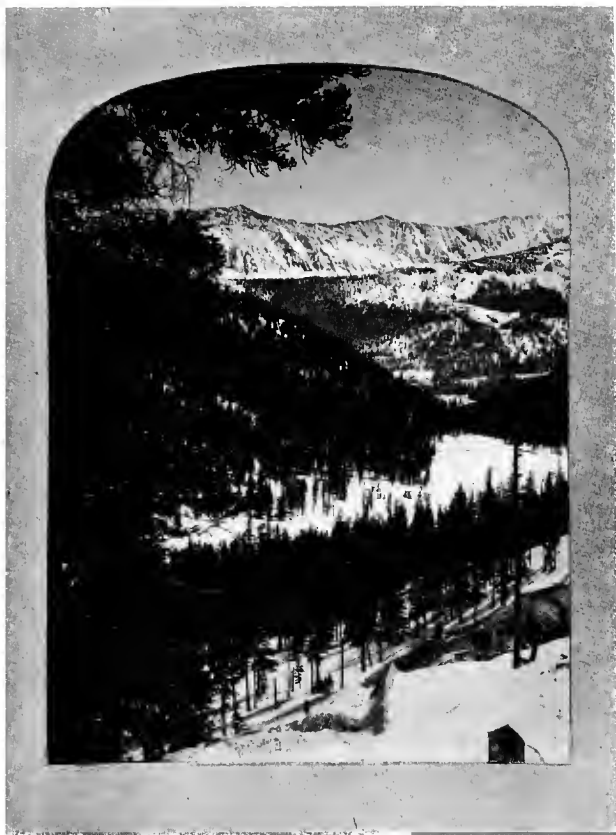


I.

A MAN with broad shoulders and a long beard, playing dry nurse to a pretty baby, may be a somewhat unusual picture in a rude mining camp. Nevertheless every Sunday when the weather was fair during one summer, and at odd times during the week days, the man and the baby enjoyed themselves on the trails in Pine Valley Bar. Sometimes the youngster was wide awake on the man's shoulders, at other times asleep in his arms. The tenderness exhibited for his charge never occasioned any flippant observation; on the contrary, when uncouth citizens poked their fingers into the baby's ribs and tickled him, they manifested a degree of gentleness not usually accorded to a rollicking, hearty youngster, or to a rugged

companion. Their overtures were always accompanied by a sympathy unexpressed except in a sudden quietness of manner at sight of the pair, as if the baby might be carrying a sorrow about with him that was not to be carelessly intruded upon and the man not to be treated otherwise than with deference.

The baby seemed to possess an influence that purified the atmosphere: while the men might be garrulous or profane in the presence of any other youngster better capable of imitating their wickedness, with this one they bit the oath in two, although he was not old enough to distinguish between blasphemy and a prayer. He was such a good-natured baby, too, always ready with a smile for any one who took his hands or kissed them, that every one seemed in some sort impressed with the individual responsibility of making life pleasant to him. The situation, no doubt, derived much of its dignity from the fact that no ties of kinship existed between the baby and the man, and every one knew in Pine Valley the way in which the companionship came about and matured.



PINE VALLEY.

Bald Mountain has a gorge in it. Hold your hands together in front of you, palms up, the fingers elevated, giving an inclination of forty-five degrees at a guess, and that will give you a notion of the shape of the gorge and the lay of it, but not the size.

On the foot of Bald Mountain, at the edge of a sparse growth of young trees on the eastern slope of Pine Valley, was perched the cabin of Clay Dickey. It was none too stately to decline the shelter of a little clump of pines that were ragged and leaning down hill, and only the afternoon sun could strike it fairly as he inclined toward Quartz Mountain on the West. In front, on the lower side, a few hundred feet of green slope stood for a well-kept lawn, if not too closely inspected; on the other side Bald Mountain rose quite abruptly, with the little trees serving as an adolescent beard, leaving the upper part of the rugged face and head quite bare. Within a stone's throw behind the cabin and up the mountain, was the tunnel's mouth of the Gray Eagle Mine, owned and worked by Clay Dickey and Ballard, his partner. The Gray Eagle had

yielded its owners twenty and odd thousand dollars from a chance pocket, and had absorbed it again in addition to five other thousand, as is not uncommon with mines—some of them being as lavish of promises as a toper on the road to reform. A trail, skirting first the young trees and then the timber of larger growth, led down to Pine Valley Bar, half a mile below, and the Bar was quite an active mining camp twenty-eight years ago.

In the lowest depression in front of the cabin, and for a little way along the foot of Quartz Mountain, a quantity of dead timber was strewn about, and piled up irregularly in places, and this saved Clay Dickey, as well as the dwellers at the Bar, many an hour's work when in need of winter fuel. It was used as a free wood-yard, that might have been appreciated and treated economically by the unfortunate in a great city, and this was really the only consideration given to it. Down through the dead trees and rocks a little brook tumbled joyously until it reached the upper end of the Bar, when the clear water gave token of the pollution incident to man's invasion. This little creek some-

time in the past had become swollen, perhaps, and had wrathfully borne the dead trees from the mountains above and heaped them up as evidence of its prowess when in the humor; this possible cause of the wood-yard was satisfactory, if any one took thought of the cause.

The modest abode of Clay Dickey was always tidy; there was not another cabin in Pine Valley that would presume to set itself up in competition. Wherefore Mrs. Dickey was accorded the reputation of being the best house-keeper in the camp, but she treated the distinction lightly.

"There isn't much house to keep — two rooms and a lean-to kitchen, no carpets to sweep and only Clay and the baby to take care of."

"Isn't that enough for one woman to do and she by no means robust?"

"Bless you, no — why when Clay strikes the pay streak again we will add another room — maybe two."

And, as if to emphasize the conviction and ward off debate, Mrs. Dickey, greatly to the motherly admiration of visiting Mrs. Hicks,

deftly whipped his royal highness from the soap box, that served him as a confined cabinet, and as adroitly settled him at one of the alabaster fonts for which he had been whimpering. And a very pretty, blue-eyed majesty he was, with one pink and dimpled hand tenderly caressing the source of his satisfaction. It caused the mother no inconvenience to lift the little hand and fondle her cheek with it—a very fair cheek, rivalling the tints of softly blending white and red roses. The smile of recognition and the pause in his banquet with which he greeted the heart welling out of the eyes looking lovingly down, were irresistible. Mrs. Dickey was obliged to interrupt him further by a kiss and a hug, then she hid the dimples in her warm palm, which was only a little larger than the pink one, and the feast was resumed.

On this autumn afternoon the sun dropped behind Quartz Mountain and put the Valley in shadows that soon took on the exquisite tone reflected from the cloudless amber in the West and every object seemed daintily veiled in a hue of gold. The soft color stole even into the little cabin and garmented the mother and the

pretty babe in a light which had a touch of holiness in its caress and which, in the sweet peacefulness reigning, partook of a benediction. Unsentimental Mrs. Hicks acknowledged the influence of the moment and did not tip-toe out until the shadows turned again into gray. On her way down the trail she encountered a sturdy figure coming up and in it recognized Clay Dickey, his woollen shirt and canvas overalls stained with patches of color known to obtain in the earth of the Gray Eagle Mine. It was a strong, clean-shaven face that she looked into and the skin of the forehead very fair, with a pleasant light in the dark eyes as he greeted her.

"Do you know that you're a very lucky man, Clay Dickey?"

"No, I don't, Mrs. Hicks."

"What! with such a wife and love of a baby!"

"Oh," and his smile exhibited a hint of sadness. "No doubt of my luck there, Mrs. Hicks, but —"

"Yes, you want to be rich."

"Exactly."

“Well, I hope you may be—you will be,” suddenly changing the air of questioning to one of conviction, and, with a cheery pat of her hand upon the brawny arm, they took their several ways, Clay Dickey feeling encouraged, and Mrs. Hicks experiencing the bliss that follows the bestowal of kindness, if the kindness be only the gift of a stimulating word.

Architecturally considered Pine Valley Bar was very much like other mining camps—not at all imposing.

The term “camp” is an appropriate title for such congregations of logs and dirt roofs, tents and humanity; it betokens instability, a desire to accumulate wealth rapidly and then flit, to indulge in the enjoyment of it without any regard for the place of its acquisition and, not infrequently, the means. In such surroundings but few privations have a deterring influence. After the earlier hardships have worked callous spots on unaccustomed hands, the poverty of all conveniences is accepted as in some sort an incentive, so that the moral and physical organizations are kept harmoniously in tone. The environment does not tend to elevation, you

understand, but magnanimity is not killed, it becomes callous, like the hands, hibernates, and appears again upon occasion. The moderately fortunate man in Pine Valley is, as a rule, as prodigal of the proceeds of his toil as an improvident suddenly falling heir to a great estate, and this is the only anomaly in the situation. The instalments are generous, beyond precedent, but they possess the common vice of appearing as trifles not worthy of consideration, because of the "big strike" impending that is to make up the sum total of the aspirant's happiness. Except, however, in rare instances the "big strike" keeps enticingly just far enough ahead to be out of reach. And all this, perhaps, is nothing more than the exposition of common traits in new surroundings, a sort of relapse into savagery after a taste of what we exalt as civilization, with the defects of civilization decorating the garments unconcernedly and, at times, defiantly.

Just as his majesty had been returned sound asleep to his unpretentious couch, Clay Dickey reached the cabin. He stood at the doorway anticipating the pleasant expression which would greet him when his wife should look up, and,

after the baby was tucked in, she came to him. Standing on the doorsill, her eyes were quite on a level with his, and she looked into them with much the same expression with which she had responded to the baby, just before interrupting his supper, to hug him.

"Is anything the matter, Clay?" She recognized his moods as intuitively as a bird understands the promises of the weather, and placed her hands upon his shoulders.

"No — only I have arranged to have you go outside for the winter."

"Not right away!"

"No, but before the snow flies."

"Then we'll not think of it as determined upon — it will be some time before snow comes, and you know it is never deep or inconvenient in Pine Valley."

"I can't say that I know it — three seasons are not enough to make one a reliable prophet."

"I would like to remain through the winter, just for the novelty of it."

"You would find no novelty, Dell, only discomfort."

"Why, I shall be delighted, Clay."

"I know just how delighted and why," and he put his rough hands tenderly on the softer ones resting on his shoulders. "You are saying to yourself just now: 'we can't afford it,' but I say we must and will."

"Don't let us talk of it any more now."

An amused expression flitted into Clay Dickey's eyes as he removed the hands and held them; he realized that the probabilities of her remaining were quite strong. The knowledge was very gratifying, still, in company with the pleasure, was a hint of impatience at the hard lines compelling his wife to what he knew to be a sacrifice; she didn't deserve it, but he dared not give a hint of that.

"Very well,—I see Hank coming up the trail, he said he would take supper with us."

"I hope he has not been drinking."

"I'll vouch for him—he has too much respect for you."

"I'm glad he respects some one."

"Don't be too hard on him, Dell—perhaps you might influence him to quit altogether," he concluded, good-humoredly.

"I shall not take any such liberty," and she

turned away as Ballard came within hearing distance.

The deepening twilight necessitated a candle, and in the glow of it, the junior partner exhibited no special evidences of dissipation. Both men were fine specimens, physically. Ballard was quiet and deferential toward his hostess, but observant of her during the preparation of the evening meal. A remark of Dickey's concerning Mrs. Hicks's affirmation and the prediction of wealth brought a smile to the junior's lips, and then he laughed. This culminated in arousing his majesty, who stared at him with very wide open eyes from his corner. A momentary look of annoyance flitted across Mrs. Dickey's face, but the transgressor failed to notice it — he was looking down at the baby; both seemed to be interested, and Ballard, reaching over, placed his finger in the pink hand which had found its way out from the cover; the baby closed upon it and kicked in a way that promised speedy freedom from the soap box. Dickey picked him up and set him on his knee, and the little fellow stretched out his hands, caressed the long beard of Ballard without pulling it, looked up into his

eyes and then at the beard, as if he were solving a mystery. Ballard took him in his arms and pressed the cool, firm cheek against his own. Mrs. Dickey glanced around at the group but gave no token of her thoughts. When Dickey undertook to relieve his guest, his royal highness was not favorably disposed to the change, and surrendered only to his mother's appeal.

"I shall have to let my beard grow," said Dickey, laughing, as he placed his own stool at the table for his partner and invited him to occupy it.

"I'll win him from you, if you don't," and the baby at the sound of Ballard's voice looked at him and smiled as if he understood and approved.

That night the junior partner went to bed drunk. Mrs. Dickey learning of it concluded, not erroneously perhaps, that "Ballard had a romance," and she experienced a gentler feeling toward him.

The days of sunshine followed each other, the nights grew colder, and it seemed as if the clouds had determined upon a permanent holiday over some other quarter of the globe.

The clear sky put on its amber dress every evening, after the sun had been a little while behind Quartz Mountain, and draped the valley in the dainty golden glow, always bringing with it a peacefulness that seemed imbued with solemnity. It could not be possible for one to feel otherwise than happy in such an atmosphere, persisted Mrs. Dickey, and Clay Dickey was won to her way of thinking in spite of his resolution, and without being surprised at his submission. Christmas day at noon found the partners in their shirt sleeves, coming down the trail from the mine and raising the dust at every step. How long would it last? and, were the dwellers in Pine Valley to have any winter? But every morning the ice, wherever it formed, was a little thicker, it was always cold at night and each night grew perceptibly colder. It required snow to constitute proper winter weather in the estimation of these men.

"There is the first cloud I have seen for a month," and Ballard pointed west.

"Make it two months and you will be nearer right."

That afternoon, without any admonition, the

sky turned gray, it seemed all at once, and there was a blue mist in the valley before twilight. The next morning there were a few inches of snow on the ground and it continued to descend, in great flakes, during the day. When the storm ceased, Dickey's notion of winter was realized; the sun had no other effect than to settle the white covering and the next snow-fall doubled the depth. The seclusion and inconvenience of getting around did not change the pleasant ways of Mrs. Dickey, and Clay confessed to himself that he was becoming acquainted with his wife. The happiness that made up the early days of his married life was very feeble and unsatisfactory compared to his present bliss; heretofore he had not considered that possible. His wonder and admiration grew apace and together, until he began to almost discredit his own share in producing the delightful result. But had any one read Mrs. Dickey he would have discovered in turn that there was no one on earth like Clay, not even the baby.

The accumulating snow offered no impediment to work in the mine, the partners were required to break the trails afresh about once

in two weeks, and, being busy, March came around before they were fairly aware of it; the snow was piled up in great masses all through Pine Valley, and in the gorge on Bald Mountain, which Dickey knew to be quite twenty feet deep, it was level with the edges; the young pines lower down were quite hidden. The citizens at the Bar had not been cut off entirely from the outside world and were getting through the season cheerfully; only one man had been killed, and as he had been the aggressor and not generally agreeable, his demise hardly varied the routine. But the Bar was glad to feel the effect of an occasional warm day, the camp would soon be free and the monotony relieved. The warm days increased in frequency.

Coming down the trail on one of these days, Dickey in the lead, the manner of the men was more animated than usual. Ballard, in his hurry, slipped and fell into the drift, but he gathered himself up good-naturedly. Dickey joined in the laugh and pushed open his cabin door with an abruptness that caused his wife to look up suddenly; but a glance at his

face sufficed to put her in possession of his thoughts.

"You have struck the pay streak, Clay!"

"I am sure we have," and Clay Dickey put his arms around her while the baby kicked and, with the little pink hands, beat his approval upon his blanket. Ballard stood for a moment looking in, caught sight of the happy face emerging from the shelter of the broad shoulders, and then of the baby in the corner.

"We have been in the same kind of ground all the morning, Mrs. Dickey, that led us to the old pocket—I have just lighted the fuse for a heavy blast, you will hear it in a few moments, and we shall know after dinner." With a wave of his hand to his partner, who stood with his arm around his wife's waist, and all with bright smiles on their faces, he turned into the trail leading to the Bar.

A dozen rods from the cabin and Ballard heard the report of the explosion in the mine; he paused almost imperceptibly, and with a pleased expression on his lips continued his way a few steps beyond the edge of the large

timber skirting the young growth, halted and turned about: the cracking of what he thought to be a limb on the mountain side above had startled him. While he gazed up the slope to learn the cause, it seemed to him that the whole summit of Bald Mountain was moving. In an instant—there could be no mistaking his impression—the entire face just above the gorge was crossed by a wide horizontal fissure and the great mass of snow was, it appeared to him, crawling down, and then he felt the earth under him quiver, as, with the quickness of thought, the immense pile, gathering a sudden impetus, came crashing down the mountain side, tearing out the young trees by the roots, rolling them on the surface and burying them out of sight again. Down upon the cabin and the small clump of pines the resistless volume swept with a deafening roar, piling up over the slope, down and across the little brook, covering “the wood-yard” and pausing only at the foot of Quartz Mountain.

Ballard had called, he thought, a cry of warning to his partner, but remembered afterwards that he had articulated no word; what he would

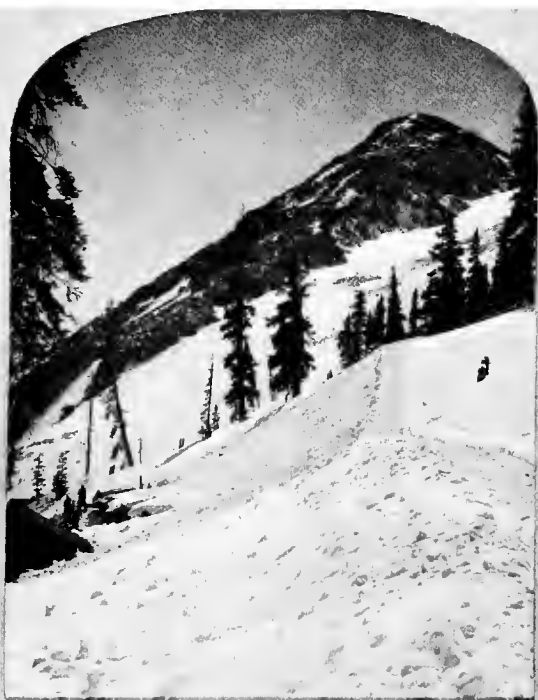
have said stuck in his throat and resolved itself into a gurgling sound, as of one choking, or like the cry of some dumb animal in terror. He had not moved from his halting place: fifty feet from him in the direction of the cabin the snow was piled higher than his head, and the irregular mass rose to a greater height beyond and where the cabin had stood; the face of Bald Mountain was quite bare, and the upper end of the slide had stopped just below the tunnel's mouth of the Gray Eagle Mine.

Half a minute had not elapsed, from the sound of the breaking limb, until silence was again reigning in the valley. He stood, with lips parted, glaring at the pile of snow, and then at the dark mouth of the tunnel and the naked mountain side; even a little tree with its roots in the air, which had lodged near the upper end of the drift, did not escape his notice. But it seemed a long time to Ballard before he regained his senses, and then he felt that he was drifting out of one terrible dream into another, knowing all the time that if he could only stir he would awake and find relief. He made the struggle and was horrified at the sound of his own voice,

as with his hands unconsciously clasped, he endeavored to pray:

“God have mercy on them!”

He was fairly himself now, with his wits about him. He whipped his revolver from the scabbard and six quick, sharp reports rang out, each treading upon the heels of its predecessor so closely that the echoes came trembling back to him in one long, rattling measure. Then he turned and started down the trail at his best speed. Half-way to the Bar he saw hastening toward him two men; behind them, a short distance, were others, coming in single file, some of them slipping now and then on the hard beaten way—but coming! and yet how slowly they crept along! The terrible crash had startled every one at the Bar; the quick reports of the revolver had their meaning and were understood; some one saw the bared face of Bald Mountain and shouted his discovery nervously. That disaster had visited Pine Valley was as evident to every man as it had been to Ballard, and they hastened with picks and shovels. Ballard turned when he was certain that he had been observed, and waving them



on, the compact mass was soon alive with stalwart men, the location of the cabin fixed and the snow set flying. Within a few minutes the men were in each other's way, and were divided into shifts, many standing ready to take the place of the first one who gave the slightest token of weariness. Down they went, ten feet, and no sign greeted them; fifteen feet,—and Ballard, who stood leaning a moment upon his shovel, drew his hand across his eyes and then bent again to his work. Twenty feet, and he stopped, threw up his hand and panted:

“Hark!”

Every man could hear through his own lips the beating of his own heart—the pause was only a few seconds and a muffled cry greeted the keen sense of half a score.

“Here, boys, carefully, now,—just here!”

Ballard's shovel encountered, what he knew to be a log, by the feeling; it was quickly laid bare and another, and still another lower down.

They had struck a corner of the cabin, the upper logs were swept away, the three lower tiers had been forced from their places, where they were fastened to the door jamb, the ends

had swung around, the corners holding, and in that cuddy, with the uppermost log lying a foot or more above and across him, was the baby, unharmed. Ballard lifted him out and the little one's voice came back to him fully in the fresh air.

Mrs. Hicks said afterwards that she hoped never to see such a look in any one's face as she saw in Ballard's when he was approaching to lay the child in her arms—a pale face, despite the exertion he had undergone, with lips closed so that she felt the jaws were almost crushing the teeth setting against each other, the nostrils contracting and expanding rapidly, and an expression in his eyes that made her think he would step defiantly into the very presence of the Father. It was a glance only and he returned to his labor. Twenty feet away and farther down the hill, wedged in between and under some of the cabin logs, Ballard knew that they had found his partner and, clinging to his body, the dead wife. A portion of her dress first indicated where they lay, and Ballard had turned away at the sight of it. He would carry with him always, not the impassive

eyes staring out of the cruel drift, but the remembrance of Clay Dickey standing with his arm around her and the happy expression on their faces as he turned from their cabin door.



A PRAYER FOR BALTIMORE HATCH

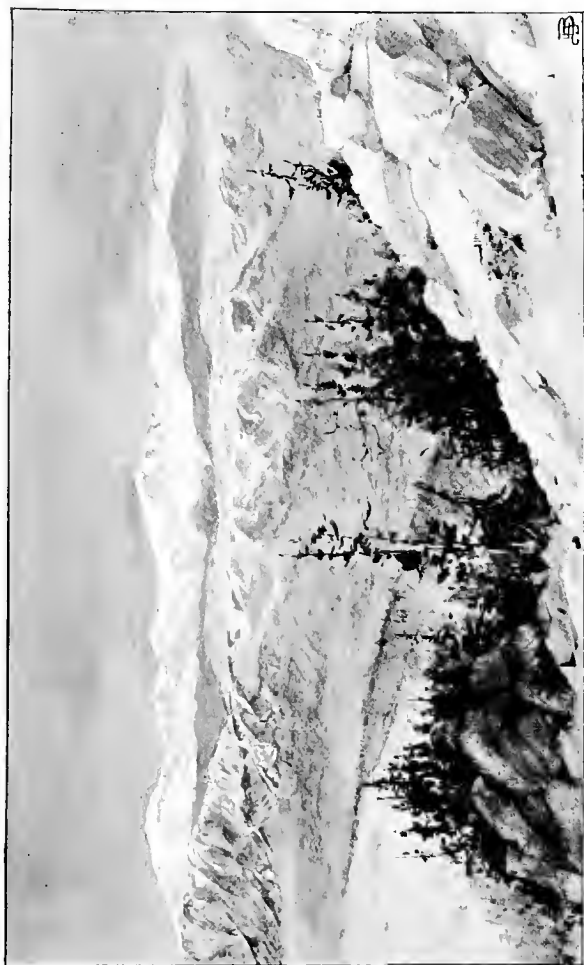


A PRAYER FOR BALTIMORE HATCH.

THE winter of 1863 set in early throughout the Rocky Mountain region; snow fell late in October and the earth was not free of it, even in Golddust on the eastern slope, until the following April. The stage coach was then the only means of rapid transit east and west; a railroad was merely a possibility, that might ripen into a fact, perhaps before the next glacial epoch; hence the smoke, that usually follows on the heels of the locomotive, did not envelop Golddust. She was atmospherically clean, so that before Christmas arrived the foot-hills, and the great Range towering beyond, presented themselves unobscured to her in a mantle that softened the contour of their rugged forms. Now and again the mountains would put on a gray mist and add a few inches or maybe a foot or more to the thickness of their white robe,

but the stormy days were always followed by weeks of sunshine and a clear amber sky in the west as evening succeeded evening. Mount Rosa, standing nearest, would greet the rising sun with an exquisite blush, and her stately brothers north and south for two hundred miles would assume the rose tints in fraternal vigilance; then, as the minutes sped by and they recognized the unsullied appeal, they would assume the delicate gray, as if recovering majestically from the surprise of the early morning kiss, and the beautiful She would bask smilingly, and white through the live-long day, chastely diffident and declining to melt under the fervent caress.

Over at Pine Valley Bar the citizens were hibernating in the customary way, which expresses, to one not a tenderfoot, very little work, play practically unlimited and the other intemperance — well, perhaps the less said the better. Baltimore Hatch had strayed in from Blind Horse Gulch early in the season, in company with a mercenary motive and “a faro lay out.” Upon his arrival he had not determined to spend the winter, but after a brief



sojourn he reached a conclusion. He explained it after this fashion :

“One night I filled up wuth tanglefoot — I don’t do it often, see ? then I got playin’ on the wrong side ’r the table an’ went broke, see ? — yer knows how ’tis yerself.”

The explanation was satisfying without the confirmatory reference, but in the financial mind of Baltimore a national bank was of the same dignity as a faro bank, so long as it didn’t “go broke”; hence the innocency. In distressing circumstances he was, perhaps, the most hopeful man at the Bar; the path never converged in his view, but always radiated; he saw “a winnin’” in a dozen directions and the last failure opened up as many new roads to successful issues. It was a religious custom with him never to dress his left foot first in the morning, or afternoon, rather; he rigidly avoided stray pins and cross-eyed people, and declined the most persuasive chances during the early phases of the moon, if it so happened that he first caught sight of that satellite over the wrong shoulder. His specialty, however, in the army of omens, culminated on buttons; a gray button

was, in his estimation, as baneful as the bite of a rattlesnake. To the vice of a gray button on a pair of new trousers he attributed the desire for the "tanglefoot" which led to disaster—he discovered his Nemesis next day when it was too late. His financial condition not being debatable and his clothes affirming his poverty, he one evening—

"Tapped Hank Ballard for a ten-dollar stake."

Upon giving him the money, Ballard remonstrated:

"Why don't you quit gambling and go to work, Baltimore?"

"Now see here, Hank, does yer want me to starve to death?"

The next day he approached Ballard and offered him two hundred and ten dollars; the creditor accepted the ten and declined the two hundred.

"See here, Hank Ballard, I win four hundred, you don't mean ter say I'd hold out—"

"Not at all, Baltimore," interrupted the other, "but I don't care to make money that way."

"Damned if you ever stake me agin."

There was no mistaking Baltimore's indignation.

"Very well," and Ballard laughed.

"But see here! this ain't no square deal, Hank Ballard! it's yourn, an' you must take it. Didn't you stake me when I were dead broke?"

Baltimore recognized no distinction between liberty and license; he was accustomed to having his own way, whether his way was to be ugly or otherwise. Ballard, persisting in his refusal, felt, as Baltimore turned from him, that he had perhaps incurred his enmity. When Baltimore's logic, as he understood it, failed to bring his creditor to terms, he suddenly became silent. The next day he left the camp, going out on snowshoes, and Ballard thought for a moment that he might hear of him again; he had known precisely such instances, resulting unfortunately, and Baltimore had intimated that he would "git even." It was a queer code of ethics that construed a kindness into an insult, and yet this was evidently the light in which Baltimore considered his involuntary debt; he was incensed because

his creditor would not accept his due. Perhaps the sense of honor is peculiar to the craft, or, rather, to a class of the craft, and was never heard of outside of the fraternity in which Baltimore owned a membership. Ballard dropped what he termed an eccentric out of his thoughts, though the anomaly might have afforded material out of which to build an essay on the philosophy of mind.

From the tunnel's mouth of the Gray Eagle Mine one could look out over lower, intervening hills and through the blue veil worn by them in the summer time, and have before him in the distance the emblem of our civilization in pure snow, set in a huge mountain's side. Sometimes, on certain of the summer days, the sun went down behind the Holy Mount, and in its decline would touch a bit of fleece above the summit and shape it into a crimson crown, or when the clouds were plentiful, turn them into groups of cherubim. To Ballard the imposing symbol set by Nature in such grand proportions took on a wealth of inspiration before unknown to him; as if it might be the sign elevated in the wilderness by the Divine command, anticipat-

ing the march of humanity. It was a reminder that always sent him quickly back over the well-worn path to the time when he first beheld the token and was told the story of the beautiful life and its sublime surrender. And now, while approaching the honors of the natal day, the great emblem was hidden, he knew, under the accumulated snow; still only hidden, to be revealed again under the gentle influence of the summer's breath, symbolizing in the changes the sweet promise of the One crucified.

It was a beautiful conception that singled out the birthday from all other days, as the day of rejoicing, and, under the shadow of the Holy Mount, it prepares one for the conviction that the purpose of life embraces very much outside of one's self. The difficulty lies in not being always equal to the proper entertainment of this conviction; it is ungenerously outstripped on the annual road. But as Christmas approaches one's step lags a little, and, if the conviction does not lay hold again, it touches at least the skirts of one's garments and one is persuaded to walk in the sunshine of the presence. Through the year Pine Valley Bar had

been pursuing its own purpose, which, under the emblem on the Mount, was no purpose at all, but began to look back for the neglected good company. Mrs. Hicks and Ballard were the first overtaken; they possessed, perhaps, an inspiration in little Clay Dickey. It was very pleasant to be conducted back on the road and into the sunshine by a little child; without one in the house Christmas would be somewhat destitute of support; the young presence is the potent exemplifier of the hallowed occasion.

Influenced by the preparations of Mrs. Hicks, Ballard found himself pleasantly drifting back and forth on this road between the early and later days. He had been wont to stray at times into divergent passages, encountering obstructions that turned him about and cast him into ungenerous shadows. One of the phantoms which had haunted him had been hard to exorcise. After his visits to the Dickey cabin came his moments of supreme trial; in the happiness dwelling there he thought that he recognized what might have been his own; it had been wrecked through no fault of his, still the knowledge gave him no solace; Mrs. Dickey's pleas-

ant ways reminded him, but there the resemblance between her and that other ceased, yet he failed to recognize the line of demarcation; ordinarily one may put the unworthy behind him, but Ballard, of himself, could not bury this ghost of a love that was dead to him, he knew, beyond resurrection. He needed something to move him out of himself, and the phantom disappeared on the day that he lifted the pretty babe out of the pitiless drift. When he felt the pink hands again in his long beard, he was brought back into the old life which he had thought forever lost. And when the pink hand reached further up and curiously touched the bronzed cheek, Ballard's vision became unsteady and he sought to hide the cause by pressing the rosy face against his own — then it was that the phantom was buried.

And it had been buried quite two years, when Ballard, with little Clay Dickey on his knee under the glow of the bright fire in Mrs. Hicks's best room, was telling him the story of the beautiful life as it had been told to him, and that this was the eve of the blessed day. Then, that there was to come that night a weird visitor,

upon a special mission, whom the children never saw, but whose influence neither man nor woman who had been subjects of his bounty ever entirely forgot, and who felt themselves better men and women for the recollection; and that little Clay was to hang up, for the first time, in anticipation of a munificent remembrance, his longest stockings. Ballard could not tell him what the pretty things would be, that was one of the mysteries religiously withheld by this stranger and was revealed only on the following morning and first to the one who had been favored. Was there any possibility of the stranger failing to make his visit on this particular occasion? No, he would be sure to come, and little Clay might go to sleep with the happy consciousness that no promise Ballard had ever made to him was more certain of fulfillment. Then, when it became safe, there was gathered under Mrs. Hicks's roof a band of conspirators made up of Indiana's wife and several other wives—women with whom vicissitudes had held close communion and upon whom Time had bestowed no favors; there was no dazzling apparel, rather the virtue of a patch

here and there. But each one came provided with a token, and each was beautified by a touch of the grace that ascended Calvary.

On Christmas morning Baltimore Hatch reappeared upon the street of Pine Valley Bar faultlessly apparelled and gave into the hands of a friend a magnificent turkey, with instructions to tender it, with his compliments in a note, to Mrs. Hicks. A turkey she had not been able to obtain in Pine Valley Bar "for love or money," and it was the one delicacy lacking in the ample provision she had made for a dinner that day to Ballard and some of his men. Mrs. Hicks, with her hands in the dough, condescended to accept, with thanks. The note was tied to the turkey's leg and bore this superscription in juvenile print:

"Mrs. Hicks to be red when dresed."

Mrs. Hicks pondered over it. Did it indicate Baltimore's preference touching the color of her garments? By what authority did he presume to dictate how she should dress? She then gave him credit for good sense and could conceive of no authority. It must refer to the turkey—but what did he mean by wanting the

turkey "red when dressed"? besides, was not the turkey already dressed? Mrs. Hicks abandoned the contest and proceeded with her bread making. The turkey lay on the table in front of her and she could not but cast admiring glances at it as she kneaded the dough, and considered whether she would better use "cove oysters in the stuffing." She concluded that she would; then she observed in this connection that the crop and vent had been sewed up. What was the use of that when she must cut them open again? and the crop seemed full; this was a mystery making a still stronger appeal to her curiosity, and she hastened her movements to get the bread ready for the oven—that must not be permitted to spoil in any circumstances. Having made it safe from possible deterioration, she cut open the crop and out rolled a twenty-dollar gold piece, then another and another, until she beheld ten; this was not all: she took out a small package, unwrapped it and discovered a diamond pin. Mrs. Hicks sat down. Was the man crazy? and had he adopted this method to declare a tender passion? This inquiry brought a smile to her face

in place of the look of bewilderment, but then she reluctantly discarded the conjecture: she was quite old enough to be his mother, and would have no hesitation in admitting it; her son John was nearly as old as Baltimore. Still, what woman believes herself beyond the pale of admiration; maybe the reckless fellow was moved by some sort of filial regard lingering in his memory; this was a gratifying solution, but, even in this view, the presents must be returned. And all this time Mrs. Hicks had unconsciously avoided the means to a full explanation of Baltimore's eccentricity. She thought of the note, already detached, unfolded it and read in the juvenile print:

“Pine Valey bar crismas.

“Mrs. Hicks

“Inclose fine a turkey, he's a gobiler but tha is allers tendrest hes fat bein wel fed i oe Hank ballard a dab of two hundred pacers an he wont have it its hisen you'll fine it in the crap and use it fer the Kid the dimon is yourn in remind of Crismas an the orfant the wach an chane is

hisen from you and you neadnt give it away to
Ballard an i am even

“yourn to coman

“B Hatch

“p s wot difrance tween selin grocers short
an winin on a skware deel to mi mine a skware
deel dubble diskounts it B. H.”

Mrs. Hicks devoted some time to the study of this missive and after several readings she could read between the lines, and the revelation, thus worked out, produced a perceptible quiver of her lips and a sudden flush of her eyelids. But she resisted the inclination and proceeded to search for the watch and chain; these she found inside the bird, set in a velvet case and wrapped in a piece of newspaper. The watch was “just a love of a watch,” the chain four feet long, if it was an inch, and “all gold.” While she was admiring it, Ballard, with little Clay astride his shoulders and blowing a tin horn, marched into the kitchen. Ballard was the last person whose presence she desired in this crisis; she endeavored to conceal the watch by closing her hand upon it and thrusting it behind her, but a

bit of the chain remained exposed and the coins and pin lay in full view upon the kitchen table. The intruder took in the situation and the articles at a glance and pleasantly turned upon his heel to retreat. His royal highness, however, attracted by the glittering stone, in its rich setting, called a halt. Mrs. Hicks felt, of a sudden, that she must disobey Baltimore's injunction; it was Ballard's business to know, and she offered him the watch. He received it, looked it over, opened the case and felt little Clay's cheek resting against his head while the tin horn was having a rest. Ballard read the engraving on the inner side: "Clay Dickey, Christmas 1863, from B. H."

"What possessed you, Mrs. Hicks, to go to such expense?"

"Me! it's not mine!"

"These are your initials," and Ballard returned the watch, open.

"Well! ain't that too funny!—did anybody ever!—here, read this," and she gave him Baltimore's note. Ballard studied it out, going between the lines as he read, glanced at the gold and the pin on the table, and then said very quietly:

"With your permission, Mrs. Hicks, I will ask Baltimore to dinner to-day."

"Ask him, certainly — the question is, will he come?"

Ballard had no difficulty in locating him, but Baltimore treated the pleasant "Good morning" with bare civility.

"My foreman intends leaving on the first of the month, and I offer the situation to you, Baltimore," was Ballard's unceremonious announcement after the first greeting.

"Bleeged — but I don't want none of it in mine."

"I'll pay you good wages."

"How much, now, fer a starter?"

"Two hundred a month — but I'd like a promise of you."

"I don't go a cent on a blind — I don't make no promises I can't keep — what is it?"

"That you will quit gambling."

"Cheese it, Hank Ballard."

"I wish you would consent to accept the place."

"I can't see it."

"Will you take dinner with me to-day?"

"Take dinner! What yer givin' me?"

"I should be pleased to have you take dinner with me, that is all."

"Mucho gracia, Senor, but *excuse* me."

"Mrs. Hicks is to give us a turkey and I should like you to carve it—I don't know how."

"Sold agin—my bottom dollar says it—she's give me dead away, has she? I might 'a swore to it—I never knowd a woman yet to keep anythin'."

"She will keep the diamond, Baltimore—and she wished me to invite you to dinner."

"Fer a fact?"

"Yes."

"How is it with me and you?"

"You have made it more than square."

"Shake! But, I say—I'd given a even hundred to see her goin' inter that turkey," and Baltimore laughed.

"You have not said that you will come to dinner."

"I know."

"What shall I say to Mrs. Hicks?"

"Tell her I'll come."

The best room in Mrs. Hicks's mansion was not stately, but the lack of magnificence was atoned for in comfort; there was entertainment in the illustrated papers covering the log walls, warmth from the broad fireplace, and from the "Welcome" done in pine sprays over the pine mantel. The table was the only obtrusive object and occupied nearly the entire length. When it was made ready, however, a way to it was found by the round dozen who sat down. Mrs. Hicks declined a seat and announced her intention to wait upon her guests, but in the privacy of the kitchen she imparted to Indiana's wife her reason for refusing to make one of thirteen. She performed the service in a bombazine gown and a check apron, with the solitaire brilliantly holding a red ribbon about her neck. She aroused comment because of the display, and gave Santa Claus the credit, while Baltimore, sitting behind the turkey, gave no sign. And that turkey! "stuffed with cove oysters," and rivalling the tint of an amber cloud on a summer evening, had never been paralleled in Pine Valley Bar or anywhere else. Ballard at one end presided over a roast of

venison, the potatoes were baked to the state of perfection that enabled them to crumble into delicate flakes at the first crack of their jackets, and then, as the hostess expressed it: "Blessed be the canneries, in such emergencies," there was no lack of savory dishes to elaborate the feast, followed by the mince pies, her objects of special solicitude, and the coffee to conclude with. When all were seated, Mrs. Hicks standing erect behind the occupant of the only high chair, Ballard raised his hand; there was a sudden hush because of that motion and nothing else, and the men looked toward him. Then out of the stillness came the sweet voice of the little child and each turned toward him sitting opposite Baltimore:

"Dod make us tankful — bess Pine Valley Bar an' Unke Ballard an' Mama Hicks — an' — an' — be dood to Ballamore Hatch."

Baltimore, putting the fork into the turkey, failed in the proper adjustment of the tines to the breast bone and was compelled to a second effort — and yet Baltimore had always been credited with possessing a steady hand, even under the weight of — "a calibre forty-four."

HIS HARVEST.

HIS HARVEST.

THE eastern slope of Prospect Mountain is covered with young pines. Bleached and rotten stumps attest the density of the old growth. The locality is "gophered" with prospect holes and mining shafts caving in and long since abandoned. The old growth was consumed in timbering these once enticing avenues to wealth, that symbolize in their decay the blighted hopes of the toilers. The mountain side is treacherous ground for the unwary, the tangled undergrowth hides pitfalls that thirty years ago were open to the sunlight, but perilous even then on a dark night. There was once a well-beaten trail entering at the base of the northern end and rising, like a bar sinister, along the face of the mountain, crossing a sag at the south, thence down into Blind Horse Gulch. At a time when the Gulch was degen-

erating as a mining camp, and the eastern slope had been entirely forsaken, a prospector, followed by a dog and driving a burro, tramped over the depression and down the old trail. Half-way and a little on one side, a spring bubbled out from the base of a huge boulder and sent a tiny rill, tumbling and growing in volume, down through a clump of aspens which it helped to nourish. The short trail to the spring and an old fruit-can on a broken willow sprout confessed to frequent visitors. The prospector halted there, seated himself on a convenient stone, also giving token of use, and dipping up a canful of the crystal, took a long drink. Perhaps he delayed his departure because of the delicious cup and a thought of a repetition, or, with the indifference of those in his vocation, to whom time is of no consequence, he lingered on the hard seat while his burro refreshed himself with the luscious grass.

The dog evidently considered it too early in the day to rest, and after satisfying himself at the rill, he ranged through the brush. Presently he gave tongue, but without attracting



BLIND HORSE GULCH.

the attention of his master; then he became clamorous without effect, and, returning to the spring, he made a personal appeal. His actions were so demonstrative that the man was finally moved to inquire of him the cause, whereupon the dog started off again and the master not following, he returned.

“What have you treed, Crackers?” but Crackers, declining any prolonged caress, was off again, with an unmistakable invitation to follow. The man unstrapped a rifle from the burro’s pack and started in quest of the bear, or whatever might be the incentive to Crackers’ excitement. A short distance on the other side of the trail the dog dashed about a mass of undergrowth and matted vines, poking his nose into it and drawing suddenly back, keeping one eye on his follower. The latter approached cautiously, ready for any emergency, but presently became quite assured that there was no dangerous animal in the brush, there being no response to the dog’s outcries. Drawing nearer, he parted the vines and halted—immediately at his feet was one of the old shafts. He recognized it as a shaft of the Blue Bird claim.

“You darn fool! Can’t you find nothin’ better to bark at than a hole in the ground! Get out, you little cuss!”

But Crackers declined, remonstrated eloquently at his master’s lack of intelligence, and stood nervously looking first into the black depths and then at the creature made in His image looming over him.

“If you are not yourself a fool,” intimated Crackers, “you will look down there and see what that is lying at the bottom. One of your kind, very much disfigured and very repulsive in its putrescence! Ah! you can smell, can you not? I thought so; now part the vines a little more and the sun will help you see.”

And, obeying this intimation of Crackers, you observe, Mr. Prospector, that the body is fully dressed and has a roll of blankets lying under it; you recognize these and the clothes and then — one who was once your intimate. He must have fallen in, you are satisfied, and there is a stifled sensation in your breast that perhaps the fall was fatal on the instant; you pray that it was, since it was to be a death of such a character, and that he had not lingered ago-

nized and hopelessly through the night, looking despairingly at the bright stars shining down; that he had not watched for the sun in the vain hope that with daylight some one might chance to come over the trail, and he could shout for aid; that the sun did not come up and disclose the rotten and slimy timbers from which the hands had slipped and the finger nails scraped the treacherous surface; that climbing to the meridian the warm rays did not dart for a little while against the northerly wall, the line of light creeping down but giving no cheer and slowly creeping up again, leaving him lingering and choked in the dark, realizing that he must rot unknown. Of what offence could one be guilty to deserve such a fate! You pray that he died at once!

* * * * *

Silence brooded over Blind Horse Gulch; the silence of an August afternoon, with the sun's rays shining over the great mountain standing west, beating hot against the cliffs of Prospect Mountain standing east, and making drowsiness the monarch. The Gulch was vegetating

through a season of doubtful promise and the citizens were physically inert, in harmony with their torpid mental condition. If any were busy, they were under ground and out of sight, having surrendered the Gulch, for the time, to the flies. The busy scavengers availed themselves of the prevailing quiet and buzzed obtrusively about those somnolent above ground and responsive to irritation. The river, rippling past, attempted to vary the monotony by an occasional interlude, but the music was an exasperating failure. In front of the Brittle Silver Saloon a coterie of flies was gathered about the sour bung-hole of an empty whiskey barrel—green flies and blue, with beautifully burnished, metallic bodies and they rendered a bass accompaniment to the treble of an occasional house-fly. One of the latter, satisfied of his inability to draw either sustenance or hilarity from the depleted vessel, with an anathema, perhaps, upon the avaricious saloon-keeper and the bibulous avidity of the average citizen, flew away, around the corner and straight up the hillside to a cabin a few hundred feet distant. An unusual flight, perhaps, for a house-fly to make; but he

may have been moved by intuition, experience, or, possibly, by some psychological influence, to make the flight and to alight upon the heavy moustache of a man with his hat over his face and lying asleep upon a bench in the shade of this cabin. This fly took a survey of the man's nostrils, elevated and washed his hind feet, then his hands, with eminent satisfaction, caressed his head alternately with the right and left, washed them again with a gleefulness absolutely patent, and then, as if aware of admiring observers, he reached out and tickled the cartilage dividing the gaping cavities in front of him —

“Pshew! Damn that fly!”

The man rubbed his nose violently with one hand while he recovered his hat with the other, and recognized his impotency. In such circumstances human sympathy, however broad otherwise, resolves itself into ridicule; the malediction is as weak and absurd as the self-inflicted blow and adds to the merriment. The sleeper, now fully aroused, became aware that he was being laughed at. It was a laugh not born of, though it might have been fed upon, fitch and

potatoes, and hence was not irritating, but pleasantly contagious. It came from another cabin across the street, that is, had there been any street. This cabin had a porch in front of it and the porch was overrun by a thrifty wild clematis suggestive of coolness, and there were old fruit-cans with wild flowers in them set upon the window-sill. In the sordid surroundings this cabin wore an air of neatness; it suggested a possibility, and seemed to hold itself aloof, as if aware of its own superiority, and to insist upon a recognition of its consequence. And the laugh that rippled out from the shade of the clematis! An impudent jay, perched upon the ridge-pole, ceased his chatter and listened as if unwilling to lose a note of it. Certainly no wild mountain side was ever before delighted with the like of it; sweeter than the melody of silver bells it came drifting down to the whilom sleeper, bringing a smile to his lips and bearing with it the atmosphere of lofty ceilings and exquisite draperies, brocades and delicate laces; Purity and all her beautiful attendants. Then the smile faded out.

What of the musician? A contradiction of

the cabin. The fair hair, half uncoiled and hanging loosely; a light-colored silk dress soiled with many spots of grease and in disorder; the little slippers down at the heel; the cheeks inflamed, and the skin flabby under the eyes; the dry lips parted, disclosing two rows of pearls, the only beauty in harmony with the sweet laugh—ah! that mouth must have been tempting enough once to melt the austerity of one sanctified, and was sweet under a mother's holy kiss!

What a disappointment! Ay! And the aching hearts that reached out appealingly into the unknown and yearned for the purity they had so tenderly cherished—what of their shattered faith? Could they recognize Julie? No! neither the name nor the woman!

The man on the bench, York Maxwell, sat up and, without brushing the dust from his hat, carelessly crushed it on the side of his head. He glanced toward the porch and then beyond, and saw a figure striding down the trail from what looked like a rat hole, with a gray patch in front of it, away up on the mountain side. In the figure he recognized his partner, Rocky

Henderson ; in the rat hole, the tunnel's mouth of their mine.

"Julie has started on another drunk." This from York, as Rocky halted at the door and caught the air of a familiar song and the thrum of a guitar coming from the shelter of the clematis. "Go over and coax the liquor away from her."

"Let her drink—I'm thinking about that hole up yonder."

"The White Cloud Mine, you mean," and York laughed, regardless of the other's serious manner, and the remembrance of the months of toil and the many dollars expended there.

"It's rather a black cloud to us, York—she's played out."

"You aren't giving me anything new."

"Why didn't you say so before?"

"I hated to put a damper on you, Rocky. Then, I wanted you to satisfy yourself."

"What do you propose doing?"

"Ask me something easy."

"We can't muster a hundred dollars between us!"

"I'd be rich with half of it."

"What was the sense in going on, when you knew it would come to no good?"

"I wouldn't travel any further on that trail, Rocky — no use in finding fault."

"You are right—we are both in the mire. I shall get out of here."

"I'd like to go with you."

"Come, then, I'll divide with you," and Rocky, folding his arms, leaned against the door jamb.

"Couldn't think of it, Rocky."

* * * * *

Blind Horse Gulch still enjoyed a weekly mail, and the carrier, in company with a dusty buckboard, a pair of dusty mules, a dusty little mail sack, and a dusty passenger, drew up in front of the Last Chance Hotel, while the impoverished partners were yet engaged in canvassing their indigence. Passengers to Blind Horse were becoming quite uncommon, an arrival really attained the dignity of a curiosity. Whether the citizens were animated by a desire to see one endowed with the temerity supposed to be requisite in a visitor, or were buoyed by

the hope of meeting a possible acquaintance, has never been satisfactorily determined—the majority ordinarily appeared upon the arrival of the buckboard; it had become the fashion and bore the character somewhat of a public and hospitable welcome to the passenger, if one chanced, or to the driver and his establishment if he came without a fare. In the latter case his familiars greeted him hilariously, or, in their exuberance, pulled him off his perch and insisted that he should “take something.” Others smiled in a way unaccountable upon any other hypothesis than an absolute mental vacuity, while others stared grimly.

Upon the occasion in question the Gulch presented itself in a body, the chance passenger being a woman, who was young and attractive, even with dust on her eyebrows and dust on her hair. Half a dozen pairs of hands were outstretched to assist her in alighting, but the iron step of the buckboard was convenient, the daintily booted foot had no difficulty in finding it, and the passenger reached the earth unassisted, while she acknowledged the unaccepted gallantry by a smile. The “old felts” were

lifted awkwardly because of their aggravating incapacity for elegance in any circumstances, and the new arrival was escorted by two rows of admiring eyes, besides twoscore massed in the background, to the friendly hand of Mrs. Hobbs, who stood prepared in the doorway. Every man's face wore a smile as he looked into his neighbor's, and the verdict was reached without debate. If any were disposed to be rude, they proclaimed no hint of it, and more than one gave the front of his canvas jacket a fillip with his fingers, in the vain attempt to knock off the dust, or with straightened shoulders buttoned it over his woollen shirt. The elevating influence was as sudden and decided as if the dirt of the sidewalk had been changed into velvet and the cotton overalls transformed into broadcloth.

Shanghai Dickson and Baltimore Hatch lounged into the Brittle Silver and rested their elbows on the bar, arranged their foxy boots loungingly crosswise, and half a dozen others following, disposed of themselves after the same manner. Baltimore, considering that the occasion demanded active demonstration of approval, vociferated:

“Barkeep, set ’em up fer the crowd.”

Multiplied recourse to this source of inspiration lifted no one out of the sea of conjecture.

A later accession from the Last Chance, however, found himself an object of interest.

“Rocky Henderson!” The name was repeated in a tone of astonishment.

“No?”

“Yer don’t mean it?”

“Dead sure?”

“Well, I’m damned!” and Baltimore, having thus announced his hopeless condition, avowed himself dry, which may not be considered novel in the circumstances.

One of the objects of these ambiguous comments still stood leaning against the door jamb of the cabin, talking to his partner. The thrum of the guitar and the familiar song floated about him unheeded. The music ceased suddenly on a half-finished note; York opened his eyes and started to arise, looking beyond and behind his companion.

“Charlie!” and Rocky faced about, startled. Standing there was the new arrival, both hands extended, her lips parted, her breast heaving—

from the exertion of climbing the hill, perhaps — and the pretty face flushed, also with the exercise, no doubt, for Rocky only looked at her in surprise.

“Why!” with the bright and beautiful expression of hope and gladness still in the upturned face — “Don’t you know me, Charlie?” but the happy laugh was stilled almost in its birth, as Rocky gave no sign of recognition; and “Charlie,” uttered for the third time, — the hands still extended but the flush gone from the face, — was only a sigh. The panting did not cease and the rapid breathing parched her throat and tongue; she could only look at him, her arms now hanging limp.

Julie, with an old sunbonnet trailing at the back of her head, stepped out from the shelter of the clematis, the silk dress repulsive in the bright sunlight. The post-office was ostensibly her objective point, but she unnecessarily lengthened the journey by crossing toward the group. She continued humming the familiar tune, bestowing a smile upon Rocky as she passed, which was changed to a stare for the new arrival. Rocky gave no heed, but the

apparition revived the stranger; she glanced at it and looked again at Rocky, incredulously at first and then pleadingly, for some sign of contradiction.

“Is it possible! Speak to me, Charlie!”

“Really, you must pardon me, madam, but you are laboring under a mistake; I do not know you.”

She did not answer; there was a slight, startled motion of her figure, as if she had trodden upon something repulsive, and the pressure of her nails against her palms, as he concluded; but she looked at him intently,—looked until he escaped by stepping into the cabin; as he disappeared, she observed York. He arose as if to approach her, but she turned and walked steadily down the trail, passed the Brittle Silver, quite brushed the soiled dress of Julie returning from her fruitless errand, and gave no sign. But Mrs. Hobbs came out of her own apartment some time after, and there was a suspicion of inflammation about her eyelids and she had a set expression on her face that was uncommon with the usually amiable hostess of the Last Chance.

The afternoon sun, smilingly contented with his day's work, hid himself behind the hill standing west, draped the Gulch in a golden shadow, and then bade a rosy good night to the lofty cliffs of Prospect Mountain standing east. The twilight set in and the obscurity deepening, Rocky cheered his isolation in the cabin with a lighted candle fixed in a bottle.

He would roll up his blankets in the morning and go out on foot.

York came in and, without a word, seated himself on a stool by the side of the black fireplace, his back against the wall. Rocky, sitting silently by the pine table, his elbow upon it and his face fairly in the candlelight, became aware of the other's gaze, and looked up. York, his ankle on one knee, nursed the other in his clasped hands; his dark eyes emitted a strange glow, it might be because of his position, half in the shadow of the chimney, and the expression did not vary as his companion encountered it. The stillness remained unchallenged for a minute or more, and the attitudes of the men unchanged. Rocky was the first to move; he withdrew

his hand from his cheek, rested it on the pine table and beat upon the well-greased boards softly with his fingers, then he spoke:

"I shall go out in the morning."

The other gave no intimation that he heeded the announcement.

"I dislike to abandon you, old boy," and Rocky ceased the monotonous play upon the table top, a faint smile playing about his lips. York made no response.

"What's the matter with you?" and there was a hint of impatience in the tone, but he resumed the thrumming.

"No need to ask that," and with the words came a slight quiver of the heavy moustache, that might have been construed into an incipient smile; but the other evidently detected another sensation, not flattering, in the motive of it. The impatience was now unequivocal.

"Don't talk in riddles."

"I have propounded no riddle to you."

"Your manner is an enigma."

"You're a liar," and York continued to nurse his knee as if he might have been coldly announcing a mutual conclusion. The other ceased

drumming and closed his hand; a momentary flash of the eyes aided in indicating his appreciation of the indignity. The self-control of the men afforded but little contrast and seemed ominous of ill.

"Why do you apply that epithet to me?" The inquiry opened defiantly, but drifted almost imperceptibly into a tone of reproach that became confirmed upon the further inquiry: "I have always treated you like a gentleman?"

"I never gave you cause to treat me otherwise."

"I am to understand, then, that you have reason to consider me as one having no claim to that distinction?"

"You could have said it in fewer words."

"I do not wish to quarrel with you, York."

"Suit yourself."

"Why do you force this contest upon me?"

"Why do you ask me?"

"Is it because of that strange woman?"

York made no reply; there was only the slight quiver of the moustache, as before; his position remained unchanged. Rocky arose and walked to the farther end of the cabin, twelve

feet away; when he turned he saw York standing by the chimney, his right hand upon his hip.

"No, York, we will have none of that!"

"I have already said: 'Suit yourself.'"

"I have said no."

"Then do the other thing, if you are a man," and without further words he strode to the door and out of it. Rocky paced up and down the cabin a few times, then resumed his seat. He was not destined to remain undisturbed.

The good breeding in the Gulch interdicted, as a rule, the politeness of knocking upon one's door when admittance was desired; the formality was treated, in some sort, as a relic of an antique civilization. To knock might indicate a doubt of welcome or a difference in the social standing of the host and his visitor; and an assumption of superiority had a tendency to unpleasant results.

Thus fortified, Baltimore, Shanghai, and another, a gentleman with long, light hair and a pleasant manner, known as Cheyenne, presented themselves to Mr. Henderson communing with himself in the light of the stearine candle. After

an introductory salutation, unpolished but comprehensive, Baltimore, who had usurped the delicate position of spokesman, brought his hand down a second time, and in the best possible humor, upon the shoulder of Rocky, with the remark:

"You see, it's this yere way, Rocky; we's a committee, me and Shanghai and Cheyenne."

"Well, from whom, and what is your purpose?" and Rocky looked beyond Baltimore, toward Cheyenne.

"The Gulch wants yer to go down and kind'r cotton to the little lady at the Last Chance."

"But I do not know the little lady, as you call her," and he looked from one to the other, stopping at Cheyenne, in whose face he detected an expression that reminded him of York's while the latter sat in the chimney corner a little while before.

"She says she's yer wife, Rocky Henderson, and her word goes!" affirmed Baltimore.

"The Gulch exhibits rather an unusual interest in me."

"Now yer dead to rights—they wouldn't mind hangin' yer!"

"Has she appealed to the camp, thinking to force herself upon me?"

"Nary appeal."

"No one has spoken with her, Mr. Henderson, except Mrs. Hobbs. My impression is you would better go," and Cheyenne's voice was very pleasant, but there was in it something approaching a command.

"If the lady should decline to receive me?"

"It is better that you ascertain of her."

"Suppose I decline."

"I trust you will not."

"I will determine in the morning—I wish you good night, gentlemen."

"You will excuse my interference, Mr. Henderson. I am here as your well-wisher, to save you trouble," and Cheyenne moved toward the door, which Rocky held open.

"Thank you—I have heard of you—in the office of mediator."

"I only thought to save you annoyance!"

"But you have failed, you see."

"Only in my estimate of you."

Baltimore and Shanghai hesitated,—an affray was one of the elements going to make up their

sum of human happiness,—but they followed Cheyenne at his instance. A majority of the Gulch was awaiting, in a cabin devoted to public use, the return of the committee. The report was not satisfactory, and the entire body voted to wait upon Rocky and escort him to the Last Chance Hotel. But the mission ended in discomfiture—Rocky had disappeared in the darkness of the night.

The driver of the buckboard, on his next trip out, had a quiet, closely veiled passenger from whom he refused to accept the customary fare. The road which they travelled was but a little lower down the mountain side than the trail, and they passed within a hundred feet of the Blue Bird shaft. A solitary raven perched on a dwarfed and ragged pine near the edge, lazily arose and flew away; he may have been disturbed by the clatter of the wagon, or, perhaps, this ebon symbol was selfishly disposed and did not wish to give any hint of the promise to him in the mangled and motionless figure lying below, of the discolored, upturned face, of the wide-open eyes into which light would never again enter.

Two weeks thereafter it was that York was persuaded away from the spring by Crackers and induced to cross the old trail. When the news reached the Gulch, there was lack of sympathy for Rocky; York experienced no little difficulty in having the remains of his late partner rescued and decently disposed of, because of a rumor—a rumor not traceable to any definite source, but potent: that Rocky had not only deserted his own home, but had desecrated that of a friend, and hence — Julie.

ON HIS HONOR.

ON HIS HONOR.

EVEN the title and position of a mining superintendent failed to make the Kid impressive. The most superficial observer, however, could comprehend that he had been reared in an atmosphere to which evil was repulsive.

Looked at from behind, his neck was slender, the muscles standing out prominently, giving one the impression that the Kid was recovering from an attack of illness; a front view contradicted this impression—his complexion was fair, the skin quite transparent and the cheeks flushed, in contrast to the blue veins; his beard was silky, his eyes were large and wore a tired expression in their brown depths, and the “whites” of them had a bluish tinge. The Kid was not broad across the shoulders and the bosom of his woollen shirt suggested an owner-

ship of the garment in one of much greater girth of chest.

The rumor was decently credited that, through anxiety for his health, the Kid had been assigned to Pine Valley Bar. But there was also a hint that through paternal influence, denied in every other direction, he had been labelled superintendent of the Mississippi Belle. He had never seen a mine, but an infusion of young blood might restore the Mississippi Belle to a paying basis.

As a first step towards the acquisition of the knowledge necessary to a proper exercise of his office, the Kid made his appearance behind a team of fast horses, and thus excited the admiration of the Bar. Then there were champagne suppers at the Aurora, and these were expensive regardless of the questionable vintage; and, at his own estimate, the Kid was no kid.

In this condition of mind he encountered Baltimore Hatch and his "faro layout," and in less than half a year he grew more round-shouldered and flat in the chest, coughed on the least provocation and lost his interest in the Mississippi Belle.

"The infusion of young blood" had failed in its mission and two wrecks were manifest. Baltimore, being deferred to, assumed supervision of the late superintendent as few men would have done in the circumstances; the Kid felt exalted and the horses were absorbed.

Gray days were not common in Pine Valley during the fall and early winter, but they would assert themselves at times, and such seasons were strong grounds for the Kid's confinement in his own quarters. And very comfortable quarters they were, considering the lack of wealth in the occupant and the poverty of luxuries prevailing in Pine Valley.

The question was: How did he maintain the old style?

No one, however, exerted himself to set up a solution — the gratification of one's palate renders an examination of the kitchen superfluous, if not injudicious.

The Kid's cabin parlor had a board floor and a carpet, a fireplace, curtains at the windows, upholstered chairs and a sideboard, to say nothing of other epicurean fancies. And on one of those gray afternoons the Kid occupied his most

enticing chair, one that enabled him to rest his elbows on its arms and to support his chin upon his hands, if he felt so inclined, and he was so inclined this afternoon. The curtains were drawn and the firelight, into which he gazed with eyes more enlarged than ever, assumed a liberty, as any other artist might, and endeavored to put a cheerful color into his complexion. But the attempt was a lamentable failure, suggesting only the mere ghost of an effort, although the firelight, without doubt, did its best. The Kid did not even exert himself sufficiently, during an hour, to change his position; notwithstanding he breathed as if he might have been just recuperating from a season of violent exercise. It was a good time for company and yet somewhat early in the afternoon, except for the claims of the Kid in that regard. His appearance made a very impressive demand without his volunteering, even to himself, any expression of his need.

Baltimore Hatch always made himself at home and lounged in, as was his custom, on cloudy afternoons. The Kid turned his head merely to ascertain to whom he might be indebted.

"Hello, pardner!" began Baltimore; then he immediately felt ashamed at having allowed himself to be betrayed into an expression of emotion in any circumstances and, from being very much astonished, Baltimore suddenly became much encouraged:

"Feelin' better, ain't yer?"

The Kid thought he was, or soon would be, and he smiled; but the smile seemed to indicate that the muscles about his lips were somewhat refractory, and the effort resulted in giving to the great eyes a very sad and weary expression.

"Yes," continued Baltimore, helping himself to a chair, rubbing his knees with his open palms and beaming on the Kid with the matchless exuberance of a healthy physique. "Of course, you bet—and yer know that it's been kind'r dwellin' in my mind that next fall I'd coax you off to Cuba—I'd like to go to Cuba, now, wouldn't you? 'Tain't cold there in winter?"

The Kid thought he would enjoy a winter in Cuba, and felt assured that such a sojourn would have put him on his feet again. But—

"'Course, 'course it will, an' we'll go,—bet yer life."

"That's not much of a stake."

"What's not much of a stake?" demanded Baltimore.

"My life."

The Kid was a long time saying it, and the weary expression of his eyes lingered after the ghost of the smile had vanished.

"Oh, come off now, do," persisted Baltimore. "Let's have a game of draw — here, I'll swing yer cheer round and bring up the table — Don't want to? Well, all right, pardner."

"I'll make you a bet, Baltimore," and the Kid took a still longer time in the last remark.

"Make yer bet." Baltimore said it laughingly and slapped his knee with his hand.

"I've not five minutes left," and the Kid felt in his vest pocket; the long slender finger did not respond readily to his will, but he succeeded at last in locating the object of his search — it was a ten-dollar greenback and he held it in his hand resting on the arm of the chair.

"Why, yer ain't goin' away?" insisted Baltimore, ignoring the Kid's meaning. The other nodded and the smile seemed more reluctant than ever.

"Now where yer goin'?" still rejecting the palpable fact.

The other shook his head and held up the note.

"Shan't I go fer a doctor?" He spoke with a strange gentleness and placed his hand tenderly on that of the Kid, — "Well then, what kin I do fer yer?"

"Take the bet?—four minntes," and the Kid made an effort only to hold out the bill; it dropped from his fingers and the smile refused to follow the look turned upon Baltimore.

"Hain't yer no word, or nothin'—"

But the inquiry was interrupted by a motion of the Kid's lips and Baltimore, supporting the other's head, leaned over him. The smile flitted into his face and was gone again as he whispered:

"I'd have won."

Even Baltimore Hatch was shocked, as he gently withdrew his hand and, still bending over, looked into the eyes from which the light had gone out.

At this crisis another interruption occurred:

"Hello, Baltimore!" The voice was femi-

nine, but loud. "Cannot you find something better to make love to than the Kid?"

Baltimore turned and took in at a glance a pair of white slippers and an overjewelled hand that held up the skirt of a soiled silk dress, then he looked into the reckless face not yet lost to comeliness. There was a sudden transition in the blue eyes from merriment to astonishment, thence to awe, as, by a gesture needing no interpretation, he pointed to the figure in the chair.

"My God! you don't mean it!" This was a startled whisper, and was, as well, the ghost of a forgotten prayer. She quickly swept round to the other side and, kneeling, tenderly lifted the nerveless hand and pressed it to her bosom. "Poor fellow." And she looked up through overflowing eyes.

The occasion sanctified the touch and the oblation of tears.

Baltimore took upon himself the office of administrator of the Kid's estate; not a very valuable estate, but sufficient to insure a decent bestowal of what remained of the Kid. And certain of the Pine Valley populace intimated

that Baltimore would have exhibited a closer regard to his duty and "the fair thing" had he himself borne the burden.

What disposition, in such event, could have been made of the chattels? was Baltimore's inquiry.

There was no answer to this — no one appearing with a claim against the estate.

"Then don't kick," said Baltimore. "Wouldn't he ruther be buried out of his own property than yourn? Ef he could say so, yes. Then I say, don't kick. Them things was his'n — he win 'em an' I know it. Is there any man wot wants to kick? Ef so —"

But no individual presented himself for that sacrifice in this emergency. And Baltimore did not intimate to whose ill-luck the Kid had been indebted, not only for the chattels, but for the personal comforts enjoyed by him after his suspension from the Mississippi Belle.

Baltimore was an expert in more exercises than one and was never known to whisper an explanation of any supposed failure of his own.

By dint of much persuasion and correspond-

ence at second hand, Baltimore was induced away from Pine Valley for a brief period. And on one day, at a long distance from Pine Valley, in an atmosphere fragrant with the odor of lilies, he contemplated his well-polished boots, quite over the welts in the embrace of a beautiful carpet—such a carpet as he had never before seen or considered that he should tread upon. He was permitted to study for five minutes, standing, the difference between elegance and the luxury to which he had been accustomed. He was nowise abashed—the emergency he could not patronize had never developed. So he responded by a cool inclination of the head to a similar inclination from a rotund gentleman in black, and gold eye-glasses, who entered and walked across the carpet like one accustomed to it.

The gentleman quite buried himself in a chair and Baltimore saved him the effort of extending an invitation, by doing the same; the host stared, Baltimore responded with conquering tenacity.

The host was glad, perhaps, to turn his attention from the visitor to the woman who entered

at the doubtful moment, and who greeted Baltimore graciously. She was a stately woman and beautiful, dressed in black — and Baltimore thought he detected in her face the best expression of the Kid, refined.

Yes, he had come, at her solicitation, to tell her of her “boy,” and at the word there was only a little quiver of the handsome chin, then the lips were suddenly compressed, but only for an instant, and these were the only signs to indicate that aught but an ordinarily serious matter was under consideration. Baltimore lost himself in admiration more than once, but recovered, with his opinion of his late *protégé* in no wise exalted. The gentleman in the chair never looked up, although aware that he was several times silently appealed to by the lady; his face was a network of wrinkles and his eyes were concealed under heavy, lowering brows; his fingers were interlaced, but they retained the gold-mounted eye-glasses.

“The Kid had never exhibited any disposition out of the ordinary, at least in Pine Valley. He was a gentleman, that’s what he was, anybody would understand that. The failure of the

Mississippi Belle was not out of the ordinary, either ; not one mine in a hundred was fit to be called a mine — they was prospects, that's what they was. If every manager should be called to account because the mine petered out, why many a manager would have more than he could answer for — nine out of ten would. The fact of the Kid having been a gentleman must not be lost sight of — a generous whole-souled gentleman, as considerate as a woman, when a demand was made in that direction. He didn't consider that his residence in Pine Valley should be attributed to other than his own inclination. If anybody was to blame for his being there, he was to blame his own self ; but there was no blame to lodge anywhere. Maybe, as the Kid intimated, he had been a little wrongheaded before his advent into Pine Valley ; but where was the boy or man that hadn't got himself off wrong some time or other ? And all he had to do was to say so, and he knew that all he had to do was to say so, and he did say so, only the acknowledgment hadn't got beyond the cabin at Pine Valley."

At this juncture, Baltimore noticed that the



gentleman in the chair relinquished his eyeglasses, but that was the only way in which he condescended to admit that he was interested, and Baltimore failed to comprehend the sign.

It was a very comfortable cabin, voluptuous, in fact, for Pine Valley, continued Baltimore in substance; and on that winter afternoon, as the sun went down, without a cloud to dim his lustre, the Kid had pointed over towards the Mount of the Holy Cross, and said that he knew what was hid under the snow there, and hoped there might be something in the promise of it for him; and if anything was wrong (and Baltimore did not believe there had been anything seriously wrong), no one was to blame; and as the Kid went out in search of the fulfilment of the promise, he prayed to be forgiven.

The gentleman in the chair turned a little, looked through the window and shuddered slightly, as one might under a sudden chill; but he did not move again or notice the visitor.

On his way out, Baltimore, unexpectedly, found himself confronted in the hall by the lady in black, of whom he had just taken leave.

“Say to me, on your honor — is all that you have told me true?”

“On my honor, madam.”

“May God bless you, sir!”

And Baltimore recovered himself in time to understand that he was descending stone steps by the aid of an iron baluster; that he was bearing with him the vision of two white hands clasped over the back of an oak chair and a woman's head resting upon them, and was conscious that the fresh air was brushing his cheeks, and that it was not freighted with the odor of lilies, but was sweeter and — then he wondered at his own matchless capacity as a liar, thought of the fate of Ananias and concluded that he might perhaps deserve credit for the motive.

FINALLY RECOGNIZED.

FINALLY RECOGNIZED.

GUY HERRICK was possessed of a wife, whom he had taken at random, and of vices which he took no pains to conceal. Nearly every one in Pine Valley Bar laughed at and with him and deprecated nothing, except now and then some one intimated, perhaps, that Mrs. Herrick was a very patient woman. Even his generosity trenched upon the border and threatened to present itself as a blemish. So long as he squandered his own gains, his prodigality might be palliated, with the proviso, of course, that he did not permit Mrs. Herrick to come to want—the want, however, was not prescribed, the significance of it was treated by the Pine Valley public as an undemonstrable problem in the domestic economy of the Herrick establishment; it vibrated between doubtful affluence and penury, lingering about the latter without

any ability on the part of the public to fix it and Mrs. Herrick giving no sign. She said it was nobody's business if he did squander his gains: "they was his'n" and he had "a right to," and if he obtained what in justice belonged to her, why: "hadn't he a interest in it," she'd like to know? and again — whose business was it? Plainly Mrs. Herrick was no student of economy outside of her own domestic horizon; the possibility of either becoming a public burden did not suggest itself, and had any one suggested it to her he would have met the same, to her, unanswerable inquiry.

She was proud of him: "Look at my Guy! ain't he hansum!" In this regard her taste was perhaps not so much at fault, except in the expression of it; but there could be no question of her sincerity. "Let him git off them miner's duds and dress him in a biled shirt and plug hat — then see!" She never progressed in her inventory beyond these two articles of apparel, but it is fair to presume that in her mind's eye the accomplishment embraced a full suit of black, and "a reel dimon'" emphasizing his claims to distinction.

Time had been, no doubt, and not a great while before, when her paragon might reasonably have returned the compliment and dwelt upon the blandishments of Mrs. Herrick; but that same Time, in its impartial persistency, had made so many impressions that she was apparently older than he. She had her mission and kept boarders, and boarders failing she took in washing and delved, scraped, and economized, even to meanness — and the self-denial might have been a virtue with her if the motive had not degraded it to a vice. But in mitigation: If happiness be the purpose of life, Mrs. Herrick was accomplishing her limited mission — in this sense, Mrs. Herrick exercised and enjoyed, to the full of her genius, the solution of the great problem.

In one of his periods of opulence as a result of a season at poker — five-cent ante — “Guy Herrick grub-staked Champagne Tarrent” with the half of his wealth, amounting in the aggregate to eighty dollars. Every one laughed at the folly of the investment. Champagne had been so knighted in ridicule, the delicate tippie effervesced purely in his imagination while his

capacity for whiskey was marvellous. But Champagne disappeared in company with a crop-eared burro, a tin cup and frying pan, a box of matches wrapped up in a bit of oil-cloth, a few pounds of bacon and flour, together with a little coffee, packed, with a roll of unsavory blankets, upon the back of his docile conveyance, and was not seen in Pine Valley for a month. When he returned, he was sober and had an interview with Herrick, after which he proceeded to get drunk, on the remnant of the "grub stake," very much to the annoyance of his patron. The prospector had made a discovery, but, like the majority of his craft, was exasperatingly ambiguous upon the question of the location, even to Herrick. When he became sober, the pair departed mysteriously in the night and their absence was not discovered until two days thereafter; too late to follow them, but their return could be watched and the direction whence they came could be ascertained. The first intimation, however, of their arrival was in the presence of the crop-eared burro placidly contemplating the back door of the Herrick mansion.

Pine Valley Bar was more interested than ever; it would not put up with any such illiberality; but as nothing short of force could compel a revelation and, the occasion not justifying harsh measures, the Bar was compelled to express itself by profane disapproval. Vigilance was increased, but, notwithstanding, the two disappeared again and returned, and the Bar was no nearer satisfaction than before. Probably to this day the situation might have remained unchanged, had not Herrick given them the opportunity to follow him, while he made the pretence of being as secret as ever. His own advantage having been made secure, the mystery was kept hanging over the enterprise for his own amusement. A stampede from Pine Valley was the result of the exposure and every one was surprised that the promised bonanza was barely two miles away and where dozens had not condescended to spend any time. Only such an improvident pair would have thought of putting a pick into this barren-looking place, and the act must have been prompted by sheer good-luck, so that their promised fortune excited envy without

commanding the respect that commonly bows to success intelligently achieved.

Herrick, however, was in no wise moved, only to change his habits after squandering the first few hundred dollars realized. Wealth was no longer prospective or coming to him in parcels; he was possessed of it in bulk, and, when convinced of the fact, possibly the most reliable prospector in Pine Valley Bar would have failed to cajole him out of a "grub stake" in the absence of security, and as no prospector was ever known to be capable of producing security, he felt safe. This suddenly acquired disposition may have become a necessity in his changed circumstances, to prevent being bled to death financially; being poor, he could afford to be generous; being rich, he was too poor to afford the luxury, and the prospect of indulging in the pleasure was farther away from him at the close of each day. And it took only a little while before the virtue was buried under regrets because he had not taken up the whole mountain side or laid claim to it and the right to appropriate its entire product. He dressed well now, and really adopted the white shirt

and plug hat and not only one diamond, but as many as could be advantageously displayed, with ample provisions for a change, to avoid possible monotony or to answer the demands of fashion, and was promoted to a colonelcy.

In the circumstances Mrs. Herrick, in his mind, aged rapidly, and while his own English was, to some people, systematically startling, that of Mrs. Herrick was altogether objectionable to him. She was too old, he conceived, for reform in any direction and the old, sordid environment had become so adapted to her that, in the new, she became disconcerted on the least provocation, and her clothes refused to fit comfortably. The Colonel had built a new house in Pine Valley, not what would be considered a very pretentious house, perhaps, in more cultivated surroundings, but one that was palatial in the Valley and that presented a wealth of clapboards and rooms sufficient for the demands of a large family. These rooms were opulent in gilt paper and hitherto unattainable carpets and draperies that persisted, under the supervision of Mrs. Herrick, in being uncompromisingly cold and stiff even in warm weather.

And she would insist on retiring at stated weekly intervals to a secluded room, there to do certain of the washing for her Guy and herself; it saved that much in cash, besides the "almon'-eyed heathen" was destructive. The other affairs of the mansion were her especial province; she would have no servant, making waste and inviting want. Colonel Herrick's shirts were unobjectionable in dead white finish, and were as delicate and pliable as linen could be flattered; he was proud of them and the diamonds, but became indignant at the offer of a patched coat in which to entertain visitors who wore involuntary fringe on the bottom of their trousers.

Could she ever achieve the standard the Colonel had set up, of feminine excellence, to agree with his changed condition? He thought not; and this, while the Colonel was to her the same Guy, only in a new dress that had no interest for her, except as he enjoyed it. Entertaining these opposite views, the announcement of his conclusion was crushing even to a woman with a generous capacity for bad English and pardonable notions of economy. He

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could not mean it, she insisted. Yes, but the Colonel did, and he didn't want any fuss about it, either. Was there any other woman intruding? No; and the flash of defiance made the Colonel glad that he could be truthful in this regard. She could have the house and half of all he possessed. This was not ungenerous from his standpoint; but her answer:

"I wish't we was poor agin, Guy, and back in the old cabin."

"I don't, by a damned sight," and he affirmed it with a laugh that, in the circumstances, made the brutal retort seem refined.

When the news found its way to the Bar, the social fabric of the camp was shaken. Some wondered, while others "knowed jest how it'd be." There wouldn't be any divorce, however; Mrs. Herrick wouldn't permit that. She would accept her portion and did; she disposed of the house to be used as a hotel, then she left Pine Valley and the gossip. But she brought away with the portion, which was large, something that she cherished more tenderly than the wealth, and which she knew would ever remain with her, despite Herrick's

rejection of it, ready to be made manifest should the time ever come. She hoped the time might come, while she had no reason whatever to entertain the dream; nevertheless the possibility was a solace in the humiliation which, with her, partook of a sorrow rather than a mortification; and if it should chance, she would take up the old life as if the thread had never been broken—not exultantly, but in the conviction that she had no wrong to forgive. Colonel Herrick, in the light of this magnanimity, was quite obscure, infinitesimal and mean, but he did not know it.

After a time he encountered and became infatuated with Mrs. Purrlee, and every one from Golddust to Pine Valley Bar, and across country, knew Mrs. Purrlee with the ravishing brown eyes, but no one could swear to anything positively bad. She was charming and shrewd, and though oscillating in debatable ground, she had half a score of admirers in her train, any one of whom would have been willing to surrender on the least encouragement. She added Herrick to her list of possibilities in the event of a satisfactory

conclusion to certain legal formalities touching his eligibility. But she gave him no hint; he understood his situation and must, of his own motion, be delicate enough to change it, before presuming to be other than an acquaintance. Sufficiently intimate, however, he might be to admit of respectful attention and the expenditure of sums, large or small, as his gallantry might suggest, for her entertainment. Mr. Purrlee was an undefined quantity in the estimation of her followers: whether he were dead, or hibernating in a winter of her creation, or temporarily retired at the instance of the law, was not seriously canvassed.

Being infatuated, as already affirmed, the Colonel must be credited with the blissful imbecility warranted by that condition. His daily visits to the mine were reduced to one a week, and his visits to metropolitan Gold-dust were multiplied. By a queer concurrence of circumstances he, three times out of five at least, encountered Mrs. Purrlee in the delightful metropolis, where "high jinks" were possible without the disagree-

able publicity inevitable in the limited and thinly populated district of Pine Valley. Mrs. Purrlee finally took up her abode permanently in Golddust, and a very gorgeous abode it was, at first quite beyond the unfolding taste of the Colonel. She maintained her own equipage, coachman and cook, and gave delightful little suppers, with now and again a lady friend or so, to break the monotony of the masculine majority. And withal one of these who knew, intimated that Mrs. Purrlee's investments were wonderfully judicious for a woman, and that her bank account was growing.

By the time Mrs. Herrick had been absent a year, the Colonel began to consider himself cheerless without her. He would have requested her return had he known where to address her, and he deserved the credit of not knowing. She had gone away from Pine Valley voluntarily, but with no intention, expressed or mentally reserved, of not returning; on the contrary, it had been her purpose to report herself in Pine Valley after a certain lapse of time, but she had kept her

own counsel. This apparently unimportant bit of reticence, in view of the Colonel's design, may also be set down to his credit. In the circumstances it required no violent strain upon his conscience to bring about the conviction in his own mind that he had been deserted and he would swear to it, also that he had pined in his loneliness during the fixed statutory period, and was, therefore, entitled to the benefit of the law. He was confirmed in this view by his counsellor, who affirmed that the "*animo revertendi*" not being manifest,—which the Colonel failed to understand but took for granted,—he might file a bill for divorce and obtain a decree without publicity. This he undertook to do, but was very much surprised to learn at the critical moment that the anticipated default against the absent lady would not be allowed—she had procured her answer to be filed within the time prescribed. Thereupon the Colonel condemned the uncertainties of the law and wondered why a gentleman in a free country could not be permitted to follow his own inclinations, without restraint. He would

have condemned his attorney also, touching his breach of warranty in the matter of the publicity, had not that gentleman been too intimately acquainted with the "bottom facts." Mrs. Herrick also wrote to her disconsolate spouse—the characters of this missive were crabbed and the orthography regardless of fixed rules, but the letter was quite intelligible and convincing; any doubts he may have harbored concerning her voluntary absence were set at rest by the assurance that she would follow in person, should he wish it. And really she was sorry that he had entertained such an erroneous view of her inclinations—she had no notion of deserting him. Had the Colonel not fully appreciated the integrity of the writer, he would have pronounced the production the bitterest satire within his experience. To adopt his own terms: he had been doing "dead work"; he would be compelled to a little "underhand stoping in another level"; and a very low level it was that he contemplated; but the tools failed him, as we shall see.

The "dead work" had not been confined to

Golddust and Pine Valley Bar; it embraced the Colonel's mining interests, and "dead work" in a mine explains itself on the mere suggestion. After three months of it, the Colonel received an invitation to call, from the cashier of the bank where he did business; a polite invitation, in well-chosen language, but stamped in printers' ink on an insignificant slip of paper, that bespoke economical business methods, without any regard whatever for the amenities of the social relations. Notwithstanding the polished terms of it,—they are pretty much alike,—no man ever experienced any pleasure upon the receipt of one, and, though the Colonel was an exceptional man in many particulars, he felt, when he read it, that he was of the herd. After an interview with his host—the term is used advisedly and is comprehensive—the Colonel felt distressed, although there had not been even a tender of refreshment. He carried his distress about with him for two days and experienced no relief; then it grew serious and the disorder appeared in his face.

He encountered The Purrlee at about this date in one of his daily rounds through the

business quarter of Golddust, and when she had passed, acknowledging his salutation, he wondered if it were she; but there could be no mistaking the figure and its carriage. He knew she was going home, and that she reached her domicile before his arrival was also manifest.

Of course the servant lied, but, the Colonel was convinced, not without orders. On top of the disorder contracted in the private room at the bank, this cut under his left ribs was too severe for his patience. He did something which he had not been guilty of doing for three years, and exactly what he should not have done in the circumstances, — he got drunk; sentimentally drunk, as a first stage, with its drivelling accessories; then obtrusively and objectionably drunk; then boisterous and threatening, at which stage the landlord of his hotel refused to entertain him and, Golddust being better prepared for such emergencies than Pine Valley Bar, the Colonel passed the night wretchedly.

It was rumored next day, and regretted in a decently hollow manner, that he had attempted to shoot himself, after retiring; but this was an

exaggeration, he had not been permitted to go to his repose prepared for any such mistake, it being the custom to relieve the guests of the inn where he lodged of all portable property, upon registration. He may have impotently suggested what he would do in favorable circumstances, and that, perhaps, gave the rumor birth; then it reached maturity in a perfectly reasonable manner, and the Colonel discovered that every one knew as much, if not a little more, about his situation than he did himself. In this view Pine Valley Bar, being comparatively unpretentious, offered inducements more in accord with his humor.

The Colonel drifted back and forth for a year or more; the good clothes were husbanded, and the diamonds, the last trace of his departed affluence, disappeared one at a time, and when he put on a woollen shirt again he had no use for the remaining gem. His coats assumed the customary gray tone along the seams and became polished in sections, his hat was shabby and his boots periodically suffered for the want of new half soles and were depressing. About this time he acquired the reputation of a man

with a mine — the Jay Bird Mine — who bore about in his pockets specimens indicating fabulous wealth, could he find some one with the other wealth necessary to a proper development of the hidden treasure. The unintentional omission of his title now affected him, and that was a very pitiable sign; it was one of the gratuities of appreciative friends, and he resented being deprived of it, even temporarily and by accident.

Within five years from the time Mrs. Herrick disposed of the clapboards and carpets, the Colonel had put behind him fifteen years at least and excited no interest. He was glad now of intermittent invitations to a meal in his former dining-room, sometime enlarged, but with faded evidences of its early grandeur lingering in tarnished gilt. He had a way of referring to the hotel on occasion as “my old house,” as if the allusion might fix him favorably in the mind of the listener, as one who had encountered undeserved reverses, but who was capable of smiling in the most adverse circumstances, as became a well-ordered man of the world, and as one holding a conviction that a

change for the better was approaching from immediately around the corner, and he would not be surprised at its arrival on the moment. He had become so accustomed to the receipt of favors, that solicitation, in the absence of voluntary offers, had ceased to be a burden to him. The contrast between the Colonel in the days of the new clapboards, and the Colonel in the days of his second poverty, was so marked that he would have readily escaped recognition, except by those who had observed the daily change.

What would he do through the approaching winter? The autumn days were come and Pine Valley was beautiful in colors invited by the chill touch of the early frosts; many days of sunshine had followed each other without the intervention of a cloud; there might be more to come, but treading on the heels of these would succeed the bitter cold.

Through these peaceful days, there was the coming and going of all sorts of people; the Valley was enticing, had produced much wealth and was rich in promise. The sun had become the only solacing companion on the Colonel's list, steadfast and fervent, readily responding to

the remnant of ambition lingering with him. Under its influence and, with his back against any convenient support, he would listlessly view the passing people, who were, with rare exceptions, strangers to him. To feel that one's life has been a failure, or that one has outlived one's usefulness, would ordinarily, no doubt, be a temptation to cut it very short; but the Colonel placidly accepted the situation and it did not seem possible that anything could lift him out of his emptiness. He had hardly the energy to frame mental conclusions upon the appearance of any person or thing out of the ordinary, and so one day, while he occupied an empty beer keg and basked in the sunlight, a lady passed him by, the hem of her garments brushing the toes that protruded through his worn shoes.

She glanced at him indifferently, but he gave no sign, although her face was pleasant to look upon. Standing a few yards away was a man in a slouch hat, but otherwise neatly dressed, with a heavy overcoat hanging from one shoulder, though an overcoat was altogether superfluous on so warm a day. He had his hands in his trousers' pockets and seemed to have quite as

much to occupy his mind as did the Colonel, at whom he cast an occasional glance. The keeper of the saloon came out and warned the Colonel off the seat; this person was a recent arrival and some impulse, perhaps of the earlier times lingering in the Colonel's mind, prompted him to remonstrate. Objection to his orders did not accord with the fellow's notions of propriety, and he was about to enforce his command with his hand already on the Colonel's collar, when he was suddenly admonished to desist by a hand on his shoulder, and the man with the overcoat said:

"Cheese that, pard — take yer hand off'n this man!"

The other looked around and into a familiar face, in which he saw an expression precluding debate.

"Oh, he's a friend of yourn?"

"And don't yer fergit it! — come, Colonel, I'm goin' to lunch — won't yer jine me? I've jest got back."

The invitation revived the recipient and he accepted with the ghost of his old laugh. This Samaritan in wolf's clothing slipped his arm

through the Colonel's, and it seemed to brace up the shrinking figure and put life into his eyes, as they walked off.

"Let me see," said the Colonel, absolutely with a hint of embarrassment in his manner; "I'm a little off in the matter of names, but not of faces — what is your name? Really it has escaped me."

"Well, now, that jest 'minds me — I'm owin' yer, Colonel."

"No!"

"I am, fer a fact, a matter of a hundred dollars — and yer've forgot it, I see."

Certainly the Colonel had, but it was not for him to dispute the other's word; and the sum! well, its possibilities were quite beyond his grasp.

"I've made a winnin', Colonel, and it's a good time to divvy. But I say, Colonel, yer seem a little down on yer luck," and the other stopped, took a surprised survey of his charge and acted altogether as if the rags had just occurred to him.

"Temporarily — yes — temporarily — but I'll be all right when I make a sale of the Jay

Bird." The rough allusion to his manifest poverty did not humiliate him, quite the contrary. He avowed his prospects with much of the fervor that dwelt with him in the days when he was actually possessed of hope.

"Of course, certain — hard luck is like to hit any man — I've been there more'n oncet — but I say, Colonel, lemme pay yer that little dab an' yer jest go and git yerself in shape — come, I'll go with yer, an' we'll take in the noon layout at the Rorer."

The Aurora enjoyed the reputation of being the most exclusive restaurant in Pine Valley Bar and the Colonel permitted himself to be taken fully into custody, with the impression haunting him that he was again fairly on his feet. Fortune had condescended to smile upon him once more, the Jay Bird was to be disposed of and he saw the proceeds in bank unthreatened by stale judgments and executions. And perhaps at the end of the game, this rude exemplifier of the divine magnanimity, known only as Baltimore Hatch, who had "made a winnin'," and shared it with a needy stranger, may find a credit to his account that will be a surprise.

Under the influence of an excellent meal, a new suit of clothes and a few dollars in cash, the Colonel, with a toothpick between his lips, sauntered toward the "old house." It was an occasion when he would have hummed a tune, had he been gifted that way, but instead he actually patronized the clerk, by his manner, as he reached for the register.

"By the way — Colonel Herrick — you are him, ain't you?"

"I am Colonel Herrick, sir."

"Yes, sir — there's a party in number ten inquiren' for you — not registered; will you send up your card?"

The Colonel wrote his name a little stiffly, being out of practice — with visions of a speedy disposition of the Jay Bird Mine and its pleasant results still flitting through his brain — and deposited the card on the Japanned salver in the bellboy's hand, with the air of one accustomed.

The Colonel was ushered into his old bedroom, now doing service as a parlor, to await the appearance of the occupant of number ten. The same paper was on the walls and he re-

membered parcels of the furniture, but there was an air of flashiness about the apartment, even in its decay, that palled on his taste and forbade regrets. The exquisite experience in decoration possessed and imparted to him by Mrs. Purrlee had remained dormant merely, through his season of vicissitude. The knowledge, however, clung to him without his bestowing a thought upon his tutor. After a glance around the room, the Colonel turned, looked out of the window and was about closing the details in the sale of the Jay Bird Mine, —indeed the papers were executed and ready for delivery, —when he heard the door open, and he wheeled around to encounter a lady — the same who had brushed his toes with her skirts that very day — and he was disappointed.

What did a woman want with a mine, and leaving the mine out, what did any woman want of him — but he removed his new hat and bowed. The lady responded and in a manner that commanded the Colonel's strict attention; it could not be Mrs. Purrlee; neither five years nor any science within his knowledge could turn brown eyes into blue, though the

hair, within that time, might be influenced and become gray about the temples. But for all the world her carriage was equal to that of Mrs. Purrlee, and while she was not as handsome, there was that in her face—not possessed by Mrs. Purrlee—which most men recognize at once and that all men are bound to respect. The Colonel was moved to bow a second time and to reach gallantly for a chair, but his hand rested on the back, stayed by the sound of her voice—there was something familiar about that, but he could not adjust the association at once, the language, simple enough, aiding in puzzling him. Then the hand on the chair back shook a little, until he closed his fingers upon it.

“Do you not recognize me?” Her manner was self-contained and wonderfully pleasing.

The Colonel wet his lips and hoarsely answered:

“Yes.” But he was not assured; the change was so decided, so out of the usual order, that it was quite incomprehensible.

She stepped toward him, holding out her hand; he made no motion to accept it, and she halted, looking at him earnestly, then:

“I think you do not know me, Guy!”

The Colonel passed his hand tremblingly across his forehead—how long since he had been addressed by that name! and it had never moved him as it did now! Perhaps it was this that put the strength of the old life into him with the faults left out, endowed him with a strange virtue, widened his vision and enabled him to comprehend and express his loss:

“I did *not* know you—now it is too late.”

“No! no! Guy! do not say that! not too late!” She moved a step nearer and held out both hands to him—nearer still, checked his self-depreciating gesture, touched and raised him out of his old self, quite to her level, and held him there.

“AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL
LEAD THEM.”

“AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.”

A DRIFT to the right from the main tunnel of the Gray Eagle Mine contained very rich ore. It had been followed during the winter until the workmen reached the daylight, twenty feet from the bottom of the narrow rift, with almost perpendicular sides, in Bald Mountain. The mineral had been 'sorted, sacked and piled up in the drift awaiting the disappearance of the snow; it could then be more readily removed and shipped. Work had been suspended preparatory to putting in certain machinery, which Ballard considered necessary to the proper development of the mine and, in consequence, most of his men were enjoying a holiday away from Pine Valley.

One morning Ballard missed four of the sacks and going to the end of the drift he

discovered the footprints of two men and a burro; these he traced in the snow to the bottom of the ravine, but lost them where the earth was bare. Ore thieves were a new species of animal in Pine Valley and Ballard, never having had use for a watchman, was surprised as well as angry. He kept his own counsel and, with a Winchester conveniently in hand, watched three nights where he could command the foot of the rift—but he detected no one.

The fourth night he did not go on guard and the next day two additional sacks were missing. The night after he made his way into the drift through the main workings and took up a station behind the sacks. The vigil was fruitless as well as were those of three nights following. Ballard concluded that he in turn was being watched and, more incensed than ever, began casting about in his mind for some one upon whom he could rely as a counsellor. In the emergency Baltimore Hatch occurred to him as one better qualified than any other to find the trail of the thieves. Ballard sought him out, communicated his loss and need, but Baltimore was unable to think of any one upon

whom even suspicion might be fixed. He volunteered, himself, to watch the ore, but the other was not disposed to accept the offer; it was "no enviable job, sitting quietly for hours in that dark, damp drift,"—he spoke from experience. But Baltimore laughed and insisted—he enjoyed the prospect of "takin' a hand in" what, in the environment, would be considered justifiable homicide.

That night Baltimore was missed in his accustomed haunts, and on the succeeding afternoon Ballard received through the mail the following missive:

"The ore taken from your mine is buried at the foot of the double pine on the southwest side of Quartz Mountain. You are doubtless acquainted with the locality. Please do not attempt to discover the thieves.

"JULIE."

Ballard thought that he recognized something familiar in the handwriting. His own hand trembled while he reflected; he placed the note on his desk and continued to scan it while his face betokened his agitation. Finally

he took the note up hastily and went in search of Baltimore, whom he found making his toilet for the day, as was his custom.

"Read this, Baltimore, and tell me, if you can, who wrote it."

Certainly he could, — he knew Julie, so did every one in the camp, except Ballard, — she had come in a week before from Blind Horse Gulch. And Baltimore was quite well satisfied that he now knew at least one of the thieves. But Ballard would abide by her injunction, would he not, and make no attempt to discover them? Ballard hesitated, and the other appealed to him:

"We can take care of ourselves, but how about this yere woman when they find out she's give 'em away? See? 'Sides, yer don't care to see the woman, Hank Ballard," Baltimore concluded hesitatingly.

"Why?" Ballard's lips were dry and he moistened them with his tongue. He dreaded, while he would have his suspicion confirmed of the writer's identity. Baltimore merely shook his head while he looked the other in the eyes.

"You don't mean to say she—" Ballard paused, unable to couple the name that was on his lips with the woman who had written him. Baltimore turned away and busied himself adjusting his cravat. When it was tied to his satisfaction, he gave it an approving pat daintily, his head a little on one side to assure himself that it was faultless, then he spoke:

"Now, yer see, Hank, ef them fellers had on'y dropped in last night they wouldn't 'a been no call for this yere writin'. It's a pity they didn't drop in." And Baltimore next interested himself in a recalcitrant lock over the middle of his forehead, while Ballard silently, and with set, white lips, tore the missive into small pieces and dropped them on the floor.

"That ere looks more like it," said Baltimore, approvingly, as if he comprehended the full meaning of the act. "She'll light out, knowin' you're here and you can git the ore later." He concluded with a cough, which he intended to be a delicate cover to his affirmance, but which resolved itself quite into a paroxysm.

"Cannot I do something for her?"

"See yere, Hank Ballard," interrupted Baltimore, still very red in the face, "I thought as you'd give it up! don't cast no bread on the waters, it'll on'y come back mouldy, — I don't take no stock in it, 'specially up yere in the hills away from tide water."

"But Baltimore, I —"

"'Zackly; I see, — 'tain't no use, Hank Ballard, — Jesus fergin' the Magdalene, whoever else did? — sabe?"

Ballard turned away, thrust his hands into his pockets, looked out of the window and nervously tapped one foot upon the floor.

"Now," continued Baltimore, holding up his waistcoat and daintily flicking off what he conceived to be a particle of dust upon the garment, "Bardolph, *a-li'as* Baltimore Hatch, kin go to Congress, *money* says it, — an' become a distinguished member of society, an' that's why I feel to spit in the face of society. But that wouldn't work no cure, — no more is there a cure for Julie."

"I should like to make her way less thorny, Baltimore; remember, she was once my —" Ballard paused without turning round.

"Don't go inter the game, — yer'll on'y play a losin' hand fer both."

"Cannot you do something?"

"Me! no more'n I can make a bobtail flush beat a straight." Baltimore concluded his protestation in another paroxysm of coughing. This attack diverted Ballard's attention from the object that had been holding him in durance for an hour. Baltimore, however, treated lightly the other's expression of sympathy and declined his advice to see the doctor.

"I ain't no use for doctors, more'n I have for gospel sharps," and Baltimore adjusted his slouch hat jauntily on the back of his head, threw a heavy overcoat over one shoulder and settled his hands in his trousers' pockets, decisively. Thus presented, he was, in the opinion of Ballard, a handsome man, and Ballard found himself weighing the possibilities for the reckless fellow in a more favorable environment. The other, accustomed to study men's thoughts, understood that he had created a favorable impression, and, in company with his visitor, strolled out whistling softly.

* * * * *

Three days passed. In the evening a light snow was falling and Ballard sat gazing dreamily into his office fire. The blaze of the fat pine rendered a candle superfluous. He had secretly recovered his ore a few hours before and congratulated himself, while he regretted the circumstance which required him to allow the thieves to go unpunished. He had heard something that day which set him drifting,—it was only a woman's laugh, heard by accident, as the morning coach was about starting on its daily trip from Pine Valley. He had turned away suddenly at the sound of it, but it haunted him during the day and now. The rude stone fireplace at which he sat had given way to tiles and surrounding luxuries altogether foreign to Pine Valley. In the midst of it all, the innocent face of a beautiful, fair-haired woman was torturing him. The laugh and the vision were in harmony; he admitted to himself his folly and yet he clung to his misery. A sudden draught of cold air aroused him and the spectre vanished as he turned and looked towards the door. An object there greeted him, which for the moment seemed to stop the beating of his heart: Balti-

more Hatch — without boots or coat, his hair dishevelled, his eyes gleaming savagely, a revolver in his hand and his thumb on the hammer — stood in the open doorway. As he made no attempt to raise the weapon, Ballard's self-possession reasserted itself:

"Come in, Baltimore." He pushed back his chair and arose.

"Sh!" The wild intruder suddenly raised his gun, levelling it, Ballard thought, directly at him and, with a finger on his lips to emphasize his admonition, crept in, gazing beyond his friend. "I've got 'em in a hole, — they are right behind yer, Hank!" came in a hoarse whisper. "Stand still! they keep dodgin'!"

"Come up close to me," said the other quietly; "then dodging won't save them."

The suggestion struck Baltimore favorably; he crept on, his arm extended, his eyes still looking beyond, intent upon the imaginary victims. The weapon quite touched Ballard's side, then the latter raised his hand quickly and grasped the barrel close to the cylinder.

"There," said Ballard, with a sigh of relief,

"I am glad you came in, — but what are you going to do with this boot-jack?"

At the first interference Baltimore attempted to draw back, but the other held him without any apparent effort. At the strange characterization of the weapon, Baltimore relaxed his hold and looked down upon it in amazement; Ballard quietly took possession of it. The next instant Baltimore began to shiver and reached out as if for support. He would have fallen, but Ballard caught him, lifted him in his arms and carried him to his own bed in the adjoining room.

"How'd I get here, Hank?" he whispered, after a little while.

"God only knows, my poor fellow, — you are evidently very ill."

"Yes?" and Baltimore continued to shiver even in the pile of blankets and the warm room.

"Have you seen a doctor?"

"No, — I don't want no doctor."

"Shan't I ask Mrs. Hicks to come?"

"Yes."

Ballard despatched the first passer-by on that

mission. Mrs. Hicks was quick to respond, and, recognizing the emergency, insisted upon the doctor. Baltimore shook his head.

"Hank Ballard, go fetch that doctor. There is an old hot-water bag at the house, John'll give it to you, — fill it with hot water and don't lose a minute."

The orders were issued peremptorily and Baltimore looked up with a flash of defiance in his eyes and then said, whimperingly :

"You boss me round same as ef I was the little Guv'ner," as he frequently designated little Clay Dickey.

"Yes, and you'll mind me just the same, my poor boy."

She gently pushed back his hair and pressed her hand upon his forehead. There was something in her tone and in the touch that moved Baltimore strangely, — that brought to him the remembrance of what seemed a sweet but long-forgotten dream and he looked into her eyes contentedly, — a look that needed no words of explanation between them.

"Where is she, Baltimore?"

"Dead, — ever so long ago."

"She was a good mother to you, Baltimore?"

Baltimore answered by turning his head away and the tremor that again crept over him might have been because of the chill.

Mrs. Hicks forthwith began to exhibit an acquaintance with Ballard's quarters, finding her way to certain relics of his "baching days," and possessed herself of an old iron kettle.

"Greasy, of course," apostrophizing the utensil that had assisted the owner in the preparation of many a meal; "that's a man's way, all over, — stale beans in it!" and she abandoned it in disgust for a battered coffee-pot as promising at least interior cleanliness. This she adopted, rinsing out the adhering grounds, filling it with water and placing it on the fire.

The doctor arrived and unburdened his mind concerning the efficacy of hot stones, water, flax-seed poultices, digitalis, and various other antidotes of promise in such emergencies.

"A bad case of pneumonia, — both lungs involved. We must get up reaction, Mrs. Hicks."

Mrs. Hicks intimated that she was well

aware of the necessity for "reaction," but depended upon the doctor's experience for the most expeditious method. After an hour of persistent labor, during a portion of which Ballard found exacting use for his superior physical ability to hold the patient in bed, Baltimore dropped into an uneasy slumber. Then there was a whispered consultation in the other room between Mrs. Hicks and the doctor. The conclusion reached was not at all encouraging and was whispered, with a suppressed sob, to Ballard sitting on the edge of the bed.

After silently watching Baltimore, and wiping her eyes with her apron, she whispered again:

"I didn't count little Clay."

"Didn't count little Clay, Mrs. Hicks?"

"No, he was only a baby,—but counting him there was thirteen at dinner Christmas."

In other circumstances Ballard would have laughed outright; as it was, he smiled incredulously and shook his head.

"You may shake your head, Hank Ballard, but here's the proof."

"We'll hope for the best, Mrs. Hicks."

"And that's all the good it will do, I'm afraid."

The morning sun crept above the summit of the Range, lit up the uttermost peak of Quartz Mountain, cast his rays into the valley, bejewelling the pines in their fresh garment of snow, and found Baltimore with a very slender hold upon another day of life. The hours dragged, the doctor came and went, and came and went again, leaving no hope. Mrs. Hicks very gently imparted to Baltimore the fact, and he accepted the announcement smilingly.

There was a minister in the camp,—should not he be called in?

"Not by no means, Mrs. Hicks. I have saw the feller, he's got the yaller janders."

Mrs. Hicks insisted gently that the jaundice, if the minister were really afflicted as Baltimore suggested, would not prevent his administering due spiritual comfort.

"His mind is pizoned with the janders, Mrs. Hicks,—I partly hearn him oncet,—don't fetch him." The protest was made

decisively, for one in his weak condition, and the inexpediency of denying it was too plain to be controverted.

Mrs. Hicks, admitting her incapacity, nevertheless entered upon the solemn duty and Baltimore, during his lucid intervals, listened patiently. He seemed to comprehend as a summary of her efforts that she was seeking to turn his attention towards his best Friend, whose beneficence was beyond mortal understanding, and who stood ready to forgive his many years of wickedness, if, in this last moment, he would only ask for pardon. Baltimore seemed to be revolving the advice in his mind, while little Clay, who had been placed upon the bed at the dying man's request, looked on wonderingly. Finally Baltimore whispered:

"I didn't think — you'd 'a done it — Mrs. Hicks."

"Done what, Baltimore?"

"Advise me — to ring in — a cold — deck — on my best — Friend."

"O Baltimore, Baltimore!" remonstrated Mrs. Hicks, half sobbing.

"I ain't — no such a man — Mrs. Hicks," shaking his head feebly.

Little Clay, divining that his sympathy was needed, put his hand in Baltimore's, and, in a child's half-whisper, assured him:

"Dod will be dood to Ballamore."

"Will he, fer a — fact, little — Guv'ner?"

"Yes, he will."

"God," whispered Baltimore, dreamily, as if he might be weighing the prophecy.

"He's our Father, you know, Ballamore."

"Right you are — little Guv'ner — which is in heaven — say it — little Guv'ner," and Baltimore, still holding the hand of the little child, and while the lisping accents yet lingered in his ears, drifted out into the unknown.

